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# DANTE'S DIVINA COMMEDIA

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH PROSE

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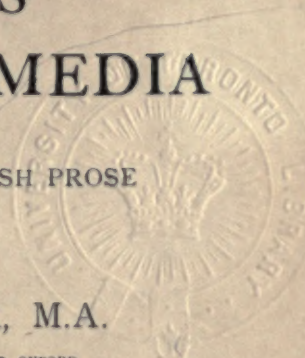
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## PREFACE

THIS prose translation of the *Divina Commedia* is intended primarily for readers who are not acquainted with Italian, and it is for their sake that the brief footnotes which accompany it have been added. I am in hopes, however, that it may also be found serviceable by students of the original work, and for their guidance the numbers of the lines of Dante's poem have been introduced in the page-headings. In making this translation my aim has been to render the Poet's meaning as fully and clearly as was in my power without adhering too literally to the words; and at the same time to present the poem in a fairly readable form. A similar task has already been undertaken by capable hands, and certainly I have no wish to challenge comparison with their work; but apology seems hardly necessary for renewing the attempt, because every one may without presumption hope to contribute something towards the more perfect translation of the future. While I have been engaged on this, I have abstained from consulting other English translations; but occasionally words or expressions have been introduced, which I had already



borrowed—chiefly from Cary and Longfellow—in my *English Commentary on Dante's 'Divina Commedia.'* From that work also the notes in the present volume have for the most part been derived.

The text which I have followed is Dr. Moore's Oxford text of the separate edition of the *Divina Commedia* (1900).

H. F. T.

## HELL

## CANTO I. INTRODUCTORY

MIDWAY in the course of our life <sup>1</sup> I found myself within a dark wood<sup>2</sup>, where the right way was lost. And a hard task it is to describe that wood—so wild it was and rude and stern—which at the mere thought of it renews my fears. So painful is it that death is hardly more so; yet, in order that I may descant on the blessing<sup>3</sup> that I found there, I will tell of the other objects which met my view. How I entered there I am at a loss to say, so overcome was I by slumber at the moment when I deserted the way of truth. But after I had reached the foot of a hill, at which point that valley ended which had smitten my heart with fear, I lifted mine eyes, and saw its shoulders already robed with that planet's<sup>4</sup> beams which guides men aright on every road. Then was the fear somewhat allayed which had settled in my heart's depths during the night which I spent in such distress. And like one who, when he hath escaped to shore from the sea with exhausted breath, turns him to the perilous water and gazes thereat, so did my spirit, which was still in flight, turn backward to review the passage, which never suffered a soul to escape alive.

After I had reposed awhile my weary limbs, I resumed

The three  
beasts.

<sup>1</sup> At thirty-five years of age; 'The days of our age are three score years and ten,' Ps. xc. 10. Dante was born in 1265, and consequently the date of what is here intended is 1300.

<sup>2</sup> The allegorical meaning of this is the sinful world. Similarly in what follows the hill represents the mountain of Salvation; the sun is the light of God's grace; and the three beasts—the panther, the lion, and the wolf—are the vices of lust, pride and avarice.

<sup>3</sup> His conversion.

<sup>4</sup> The sun.

my course over the lone hillside in such wise that the lower foot was ever the steadier<sup>1</sup>; when lo! just where the steep ascent commenced, a panther appeared, supple and exceeding nimble, which was covered with spotted fur. Nor did it withdraw from before my face; nay, so greatly did it impede my progress that once and again I turned me to retreat. The time was morning prime, and the sun was mounting upward with those stars<sup>2</sup> which were in his company when the Love divine set in motion at the first those beauteous objects, so that the hour of day and the kindly season furnished me with good hope of overcoming that beast with the showy coat; yet this availed not to quell my panic at the sight of a lion which I beheld. It seemed as if he were coming on to meet me with head upreared and ravenous hunger, so that methought the air was dismayed thereat; and withal a she-wolf came, who in her leanness appeared cumbered by manifold cravings, the same who erewhile hath brought many folk to low estate. So greatly did this monster overpower me by the terror which proceeded from her looks, that I lost all hope of reaching the mountain height. And even as one who rejoices in his winnings, but when the time arrives for him to lose betrays sad melancholy in his every thought; such became I through the merciless beast, which advancing toward me forced me to retire step by step to the sunless region.

Meeting of  
Dante and  
Virgil.

While I was hurrying downward toward those depths, there presented himself before mine eyes one who seemed enfeebled by long silence<sup>3</sup>. When I beheld this being in

<sup>1</sup> In mounting the lower foot is that which steadies the body.

<sup>2</sup> The constellation of Aries, in which the sun is in the early spring. In the middle ages the Creation was believed to have taken place at the vernal equinox.

<sup>3</sup> Virgil, who is here introduced, symbolizes human reason in its



the wide wilderness, 'Have compassion on me,' I exclaimed to him, 'whate'er thou art, whether a spirit or very man.' 'Not a man,' he replied to me; 'I was once a man, and my parents were Lombards, both of them from Mantua as their fatherland. Under Julius was I born, though late in time, and I lived at Rome beneath the good Augustus' sway, in the days of the false and spurious gods. A poet I was, and I sang of Anchises' son the just, who came from Troy after proud Ilion was consumed by fire. But why art thou returning to so dread annoy? Why dost thou not ascend the gladsome mountain, which is the origin and source of all joy?' 'Say, art thou that Virgil, that fountain-head whence so copious a stream of language proceeds?' Thus with reverent brow did I make answer to him. 'Thou glory and light of all other poets, may the long study and ardent love avail me, which hath caused me closely to con thy volume. Thou art my master and my authority: thou and thou only art he from whom I derived the fair style which hath won me honour. See there the beast by reason of which I turned me; aid me to escape her, renowned sage, for she sets my veins and pulses throbbing.'

'Thee it behoves to pursue another journey,' he replied, when he perceived that I was in tears, 'if thou desirest to escape from this wild spot; for this beast which occasions thy cries suffers none to pass by her way, but impedes them so as to cause their death; and so evil and malevolent is her nature, that she never satisfies her craving appetite, but after being fed hungers more than before. Many are the animals wherewith she mates, and there will be yet more, until the Greyhound<sup>1</sup> comes, who highest development; in this character he is qualified to be Dante's guide through Hell and Purgatory.

Virgil undertakes to be Dante's guide.

<sup>1</sup> Dante's patron, Can Grande della Scala of Verona, is probably meant;

will bring her to a painful death. He for his sustenance shall take, not land nor lucre, but wisdom, love and virtue, and between Feltro and Feltro shall his dominion be <sup>1</sup>. Of Italy in her low estate shall he be the deliverer—that Italy, for whom the maiden Camilla, with Euryalus and Turnus and Nisus, were wounded and died. He shall chase forth the monster through every town, until he hath sent her back to Hell, whence through envy she first issued forth <sup>2</sup>. Wherefore for thy benefit I decree after reflexion due, that thou shalt follow me, and I will be thy guide, and will conduct thee hence through an eternal place, where thou shalt hear the despairing shrieks of those ancient souls in pain, who one and all invoke the second death <sup>3</sup>: and thereafter thou shalt see those who are contented in the fire, for that they hope in God's good time to reach the blessed folk. Unto them if afterward thou desirest to ascend, a spirit <sup>4</sup> more worthy than I shall be appointed thereto, with whom I will leave thee at my departure; for that Potentate who reigns in heaven above, because I was rebellious against his law, wills not that any by my guidance should enter his city. His dominion is everywhere, but there he is king; there is his city and his exalted seat: happy the man to whom he there assigns a place! And I to him: 'Poet, I entreat thee by that God whom thou knewest not, in order that I may escape this evil and worse than this, to lead me where but now thou didst propose, so that I may

the mastiff appears as an emblem on the coat of arms of his family, the Scaligers, but the intimation here, being oracular, is purposely vague.

<sup>1</sup> The towns of Feltre, near Belluno, and of Montefeltro in Romagna mark the northern and southern limits of the territory, which was the scene of Can Grande's operations in the imperial cause.

<sup>2</sup> The envy of the Devil caused the Fall of man.

<sup>3</sup> Annihilation is probably meant.

<sup>4</sup> Beatrice, who represents theology or revealed truth.

behold St. Peter's gate<sup>1</sup>, and those whom thou representest as so disconsolate.' Thereupon he set forth, and I followed in his footsteps.

## CANTO II. INTRODUCTORY

THE day was departing<sup>2</sup>, and the darkened air was relieving from their labours the animals on earth, and I was preparing all alone to sustain the struggle alike of the journey and of my piteous thoughts, which my mind, intent on its purpose, shall relate. Ye Muses, thou lofty spirit of genius, be now mine aid. O mind, that didst record what I saw, here shall thy nobility be made manifest.

*Invocation of the Muses.*

I thus began: 'Poet who dost guide me, ere thou dost commit me to the hazardous transit, bethink thee whether my powers are adequate to the task. Thou sayst that Silvius' sire<sup>3</sup>, while yet clothed in human flesh, visited the immortal world, and was there in the body. Wherefore, if the adversary of all evil<sup>4</sup> was gracious to him, considering the mighty result<sup>5</sup> which was to proceed from him, and the person<sup>6</sup>, and his greatness, this cannot but approve itself to a reflecting mind; for in the Empyrean Heaven he was chosen to be the father of Rome, the fostering city, and of her empire; both the one and the other whereof (to speak without reserve) were

*Dante's reluctance to enter Hell.*

<sup>1</sup> The gate of Purgatory, where the Angel sits, who is St. Peter's deputy; cp. *Purg.* ix. 117, 127.

<sup>2</sup> The time is the evening of Good Friday, April 8, 1300. It should be noticed that Eastertide 1300 is carefully observed throughout the poem, as the date of Dante's Vision, so that all references to events of a later date than this are to be regarded as prophetic.

<sup>3</sup> Aeneas; cp. *Virg. Aen.* vi. 763.

<sup>4</sup> God.

<sup>5</sup> The Roman Empire.

<sup>6</sup> The Emperor.



established as the holy seat, which the successor of Peter, the highest of that name, doth occupy. In the course of this journey, for which thou celebratest him, he heard things, which were the cause of his victory and of the mantle of the Papacy. Thither went afterwards the chosen Vessel<sup>1</sup>, to bring thence support to that faith which is the starting-point for the way of salvation. But why should I come thither? Who authorizes it? I am not Aeneas, I am not Paul: neither do I nor doth any other deem me worthy thereof. Wherefore, if I consent to come, I fear lest my coming be an act of folly; thou art wise, thou understandest the matter better than my words express it.' And even as one who renounces his former wishes, and through the prompting of fresh thoughts changes his view, so that he withdraws wholly from what he hath begun, such became I on that dark hillside; so that on reflexion I cancelled the enterprise which was so promptly undertaken.

How Virgil  
was com-  
missioned  
by Beatrice.

'If I have understood thy words aright,' replied that shade of the high-souled one, 'the impediment which checks thy spirit is cowardice; the which oftentimes doth hamper a man, so that it diverts him from honourable enterprise, as mistake of sight doth a beast, when it shies. In order that thou mayst be delivered from this fear, I will tell thee wherefore I came, and what I heard at the first moment when I sorrowed for thee. I was in the number of those whose state is negative, when a Lady called me, so saintly and so fair, that I besought her to tell me her bidding. Her eyes shone more brightly than the stars; and with angelic voice she began to speak to me in sweet low tones: "O courteous Mantuan spirit, whose fame still endures in the world, and shall endure so long as the heavenly bodies pursue their onward way, one

<sup>1</sup> St. Paul; cp. Acts ix. 15.

whom I love but fortune loves not, is so impeded in his course on the lone hillside that he hath turned him in affright; and from that which I have heard in Heaven concerning him, I fear me he hath already so lost his way, that I have started all too late to succour him. Now hie thee, and by thy skill in speech and whatever is requisite for his deliverance, lend him such aid that I may be comforted thereby. 'Tis Beatrice bids thee go: I have come from a place whither I long to return; 'twas love, which causes me to speak, that impelled me. When I am once more in the presence of my Lord, oftentimes will I express to Him my approval of thee." At this point she ceased, and anon I began: "O puissant Lady, through whom alone the human race rises superior to all that is contained within that Heaven which hath the narrowest orbit<sup>1</sup>, so pleasing to me is thy behest, that obedience to it, were it already paid, lags behind my wishes; there is no further need for thee to disclose to me thy desires. But tell me wherefore thou dost not shrink from descending hither to this centre from the spacious place<sup>2</sup> whither thou longest to return." "Since thou desirest to know so much of the heart of the matter," she replied to me, "I will tell thee in few words why I am not afraid to enter here. Those things alone are rightly feared which have power to harm men; not so the rest, for they are not to be dreaded. Blessed be God, he hath so made me, that your distress affects me not, nor doth the flame of yonder burning assail me. There is in

<sup>1</sup> i.e. 'rises superior to everything sublunary.' The Heaven here spoken of is the sphere of the Moon, which is the nearest to the earth, and consequently the narrowest, of the concentric spheres which form Dante's Heaven. It is through theology, which Beatrice represents, that men rise above sublunary things.

<sup>2</sup> The Empyrean Heaven.

Heaven a noble Lady<sup>1</sup>, who is grieved at this hindrance wherewith I send thee to deal, so that she mitigates the severity of judgement on high. She with urgent words besought Lucia<sup>2</sup>, saying: 'Now is thy votary in need of thee, and to thy care I entrust him.' Lucia, the foe of all harshness, hied her and came to my station, where I was seated by the ancestress Rachel. 'Beatrice,' she said, 'thou in whom God's glory is truly seen, wherefore succourest thou not him who loved thee so, that through thee he rose above the vulgar herd? Hearest thou not the sadness of his lament? Seest thou not the death which assails him on the rushing stream<sup>3</sup>, than which the sea is not wilder.' Never did a man on earth so speed him, either to win an advantage or to escape mishap, as did I, when after these words were uttered I descended hither from my blessed seat, confiding in thy skilful speech, which confers honour both on thee and on those who have listened thereto." After she had thus addressed me, she turned away her bright eyes in tears, whereby she caused me the more to hasten my coming; and I came to thee even as she willed, and delivered thee from the presence of that monster, which barred for thee the direct way to the fair Mountain. What then is thy difficulty? Why, why dost thou halt? Why give entrance into thy heart to so great cowardice? Wherefore hast thou no boldness, no confidence, seeing that three such blessed Dames take thought for thee in the court of Heaven, and my words promise thee so great good?"

Dante consents to go.

Even as the flowerets, which droop and close through the frosts of night, so soon as the sun lightens upon them expand

<sup>1</sup> The Blessed Virgin; she represents prevenient grace.

<sup>2</sup> St. Lucy was Dante's patron Saint; she represents illuminative grace.

<sup>3</sup> The torrent of ungodliness.



and upraise themselves upon their stems, so was it with me and my exhausted powers; and so much good courage rushed into my heart, that like a resolute spirit I thus began: 'How compassionate was she who came to mine aid, and how courteous thou, who didst so readily obey the truthful words she addressed to thee! Thou by thy speech hast so disposed my heart with longing to come, that I have returned to my original purpose. Lead onward then, for we two have but one will: thou art the guide, the lord and the master thou.' These words I spake to him, and after he had started on his way, I entered on the wild deep-sunken road.

### CANTO III. THE ANTE-HELL

'Through me ye go into the city dolorous; through me The gate of Hell. ye go into eternal suffering; through me ye go amid the lost folk. By justice ~~was~~ my sublime Creator moved: I was made by the divine power, the supreme wisdom, and the primal love<sup>1</sup>. Before me was not anything created save the eternal things, and I endure eternally; abandon all hope ye that enter here.' These words I saw inscribed above a gate in dark hues: wherefore I said, 'Master, their meaning is appalling to me.' And as a well-advised person he answered me: 'Here it behoves to leave behind all faint-heartedness; here it behoves that all cowardice should be extinguished. We have reached the place where I told thee that thou shalt see the doleful folk, who have lost the guerdon of the mind<sup>2</sup>.' And after he had laid his hand on mine, with cheerful looks, wherefrom I received comfort, he made me enter the world of mystery.

<sup>1</sup> These three qualities represent the three Persons of the Trinity.

<sup>2</sup> i. e. the knowledge of God.

The Ante-  
Hell; spirits  
of the  
pusillani-  
mous.

There sighs, lamentations, and piercing shrieks of woe resounded through the starless air, so that at first I shed tears thereat. Strange tongues, dread utterances, words of wailing, wrathful tones, cries loud or faint, and the smiting of hands accompanying them, created a tumult, which swirls continually in that atmosphere dark for evermore, like the sand when a whirlwind is blowing. And I, whose head was wrapt in terror, said: 'Master, what is this which I hear? And what folk are these who seem so mastered by their pain?' And he to me: 'This dismal strain proceeds from the sorry souls of those, who lived without infamy and without praise. They are mingled with that caitiff crew of the angels who were not rebellious, nor yet faithful to God, but were for themselves. The Heavens expelled them lest they should be sullied by them; nor yet doth the depth of Hell receive them, seeing that the criminals would have whereof to glory on their account.' And I: 'Master, what is it that so oppresses them, causing them to moan so loudly?' He replied: 'In very few words I will tell thee. These spirits have no hope of death, and their blind life is so debased, that they are envious of every other lot. The world suffers no rumour of them to survive; mercy disdains them and justice too; let us not talk of them, but look thou and pass by.' And as I watched I beheld a banner, which swaying hither and thither rushed onward with such speed, that it appeared to me to scorn all repose: and behind it came so long a train of people, that I could never have conceived that so many had been unmade by death. After I had identified certain of their number, I saw and recognized the shade of him<sup>1</sup> who made through cowardice the great renunciation. Forthwith I perceived,

<sup>1</sup> This is usually regarded as being Pope Celestine V, who abdicated the Papacy within a year of his election in 1294.

and that with certainty, that this was the faction of those recreant ones, who are displeasing to God and to his enemies. These wretches, who never were alive, were grievously goaded, naked as they were, by gadflies and wasps which were in that spot. These bedewed their faces with blood, which, mingled with tears, was gathered up at their feet by loathsome worms.

And when I set myself to scan the further view, I beheld people on the bank of a mighty river; wherefore I said: 'Master, grant me now to know what folk these are, and what ordinance causes them to appear so eager to cross, as by the dim light I perceive them to be.' And he to me: 'The matter will be clear to thee, when we halt in our course on the melancholy shore of Acheron.' Then with bashful and downcast eyes, fearing lest I might weary him by my talk, I abstained from speaking until we reached the stream. And lo! there came in a vessel towards us an old man, white with the locks of eld, who cried: 'Woe to you, ye sinful souls: renounce all hope of beholding Heaven! I come to conduct you to the other bank, into eternal darkness, into heat and cold. And thou who art yonder, thou living soul, depart from among the company of the dead.' But when he perceived that I did not depart, he said: 'By another way, by other ports shalt thou reach the shore; come not hither to make the passage: a lighter bark<sup>1</sup> is appointed to bear thee.' And to him my Guide: 'Vex not thyself, Charon: it is so willed there, where power accompanies the will; do thou inquire no further.' These words imposed silence on the shaggy cheeks of the pilot of the livid marsh, who round his eyes had wheels of flame. But those souls, weary as they were and naked, changed colour and gnashed their teeth, so

Charon the  
ferryman  
of the  
Acheron.

<sup>1</sup> The vessel which bears the souls to Purgatory, Purg. ii. 41.



soon as they heard the pitiless words. They cursed God and their parents, the human race, the place, the time and the seed of their ancestry and of their birth. Anon with loud laments they congregated all together to the accursed shore, which awaits every one that fears not God. Charon the demon, with eyes like burning embers, beckoning to them, assembles them all: whoso lingers, he smites him with his oar. As drop the autumn leaves one after the other, until the branch sees all its bravery fallen to earth, so was it with Adam's sinful offspring; one by one they fling themselves from that shore at his signals, like a bird at its recall. Thus do they depart over the dark water, and ere they have landed on the further bank, again a fresh company forms on the hither side.

A shock of  
earthquake.

'My son,' said the courteous Master, 'all those who die in the wrath of God assemble here from every land; and they are fain to cross the river, for the divine justice incites them so, that their fear is converted into longing. By this way no righteous soul doth ever pass; wherefore, if Charon is vexed on thy account, thou canst clearly understand now what his words imply<sup>1</sup>.' No sooner had he ceased, than the gloomy tract quaked so violently, that through terror thereof the recollection bathes anew my limbs with sweat. From the tearful earth there issued a wind, which flashed forth a crimson light, whereby all my faculties were overpowered; and I fell like one mastered by sleep.

#### CANTO IV. THE FIRST CIRCLE

The first  
Circle, or  
Limbo.

The deep sleep within my head was broken by a roar of thunder, so that I started like one awakened by force; and

<sup>1</sup> viz., that Dante was destined to be saved.

rising to my feet I looked around me with eyes refreshed, gazing steadily to reconnoitre the place wherein I was<sup>1</sup>. I found myself in very sooth on the edge of the dolorous vale of the abyss, which concentrates the thunder of infinite wailings; so dark it was and deep and misty, that, peer as I would into the depths, I could distinguish nothing there. 'Descend we now below into the sightless world,' began the Poet all deathly pale; 'I will go first, and thou shalt follow me.' And I, who had observed his pallor, said: 'How shall I come, if thou art dismayed, who when I falter art wont to be my stay?' And he to me: 'It is the anguish of the folk here below which causes my face to wear that hue of pity which thou takest for fear. Let us proceed, for the length of our journey urges haste.' So he went onward, and caused me also to enter the first Circle which encompasses the abyss<sup>2</sup>. There, to judge by the ear, there was naught of lamentation beyond sighs, which set quivering the everlasting air. These arose from the sorrow exempt from torment, which was felt by the crowds—and they were many and great—of children and women and men. The kind Master said to me: 'Dost thou not ask what spirits these are whom thou seest? Now, before proceeding further, I would have thee know that they committed no sin; and if merit accrues to them this suffices not, seeing that they received not baptism, which is essential to the faith that thou believest: and if they lived before Christianity, they did not worship God aright, and in the number of these am I myself. For such deficiencies are we lost, not for any guilt beyond; and our suffering is confined to this, that we live in longing

<sup>1</sup> During his sleep Dante has been transported across the Acheron.

<sup>2</sup> This Circle is Limbo, which contains the spirits of unbaptized infants and of the virtuous heathen.

without hope.' Great grief seized my heart when I heard his words, for that I learnt that men of high excellence were in the negative state within that Limbo.

The spirits  
delivered by  
Christ.

'Tell me, my Master, tell me, my Lord,' I began, desiring to certify myself concerning that faith which overcomes all error; 'did any ever go forth from hence, either through his own or through another's deserts, who thereafter was blessed?' And seeing through my veiled speech, he replied: 'I had but lately entered on this state, when I beheld the arrival of a Mighty One, crowned with the token of victory. He delivered from this place the shade of our first parent and of Abel his son, and that of Noah, and of Moses the lawgiver and servant of God; Abraham the patriarch and David the king, Israel with his father and his sons and Rachel for whom he served so long, and many more; and he made them blessed: and I would have thee know that before these no souls of men were saved.' We halted not on our way for all his converse, but passed through the forest without pausing--the forest, I mean, of crowded spirits.

The great  
classic  
poets.

As yet we had not advanced far from the place where I had slept, when I perceived a fire, which illuminated one half of the dark Circle. We were still distant from it a space, yet not so far as to prevent me from discerning in some measure that that spot was occupied by persons of dignity. 'O thou who dost adorn both science and art, who are these that have this token of high honour, which distinguishes them from the condition of the rest?' And he to me: 'The honourable reputation, through which they are celebrated in thy world above, wins favour in Heaven which exalts them so.' Meanwhile, I heard a voice exclaim: 'Give honour to the sublime poet; his shade, which had quitted us, is returning.' After the voice ceased and spake no more, I saw four



mighty shades approaching us, whose countenances were neither sad nor joyful. The good Master then began to say: 'Give heed to him who bears in his hand that sword, and walks in front of the three as their lord. That is Homer, the prince of poets; he who comes next is Horace the moralist; the third is Ovid, and Lucan the last. Because each of them enjoys, as I do, the title proclaimed by the solitary voice, they do me honour, and therein they do well.' So did I view the assembling of the fair school of those masters of the highest flight of song, which soars like an eagle above the others. After they had conversed awhile among themselves, they turned them to me with signs of welcome, whereat my Master smiled: and a far higher honour still did they pay me, for they associated me with their number, so that I was the sixth in that sage company. In this wise did we proceed as far as the light, conversing on themes, which it is as becoming not to mention now, as it was becoming to discuss them there.

We reached the foot of a noble castle, encompassed seven times by lofty walls, and defended throughout its circuit by a fair river<sup>1</sup>. This we crossed as if it were solid ground; through seven gates I entered with those sages, and we reached a fresh and verdant meadow. The occupants of this had pensive and serious eyes, and great dignity in their countenances; they spake but little, and with soft voices. Thus on one side of it did we wend our way to an open spot,

Other distinguished  
heathens.

<sup>1</sup> The Castle of Limbo and everything connected with it are allegorical. The castle itself is philosophy, and its seven walls, by which the eminent heathen are marked off from the rest, are the seven virtues. The seven gates by which it is entered are the seven subjects of learned study, which form the Trivium and Quadrivium of the Schools. The river is oratory; and this the wise pass over dryshod, because they are not dependent on the influence of persuasion.

luminous and elevated, so that they all were visible. There in front of us on the enamelled verdure the mighty spirits were pointed out to me, so that my soul is exalted at having seen them. I saw Electra<sup>1</sup> with a numerous company, among whom I recognized Hector and Aeneas, and Caesar the falcon-eyed in arms. Camilla<sup>2</sup> I saw and Penthesilea, and on the opposite side King Latinus<sup>3</sup> sitting with his daughter Lavinia. I saw that Brutus who expelled Tarquinius, Lucretia, Julia<sup>4</sup>, Marcia<sup>5</sup> and Cornelia<sup>6</sup>, and Saladin I saw by himself apart. After I had raised mine eyes somewhat higher, I saw the Master of those who know<sup>7</sup>, sitting in the midst of a philosophic company. All look towards him, all do him honour. There saw I Socrates and Plato, who stand nearest to him in front of the rest. Democritus<sup>8</sup> was there, who attributes the world to chance, Diogenes, Anaxagoras and Thales, Empedocles, Heraclitus and Zeno: and I saw the faithful investigator of the qualities of plants, Dioscorides, I mean<sup>9</sup>: Orpheus too, I beheld, Tullius and Linus, and the moralist Seneca: Euclid the geometrician, and

<sup>1</sup> The mother of Dardanus the founder of Troy; cp. Virg. *Aen.* viii. 134, 135.

<sup>2</sup> Camilla and Penthesilea were Amazons; Camilla fought against the Trojans in Italy, Penthesilea for them.

<sup>3</sup> The ally of the Trojans, whose daughter Lavinia became Aeneas' wife.

<sup>4</sup> The daughter of Julius Caesar, who married Pompey.

<sup>5</sup> Wife of Cato.

<sup>6</sup> The mother of the Gracchi.

<sup>7</sup> Aristotle.

<sup>8</sup> Of the personages who follow, the first eight represent various branches of philosophy; Orpheus and Linus, music; Cicero ('Tullius'), oratory; Seneca, moral philosophy; Euclid and Ptolemy, mathematics; Hippocrates, Galen, Avicenna, and Averroës, medicine.

<sup>9</sup> His work on plants was written chiefly from the point of view of their medical qualities.

Ptolemy; Hippocrates, Avicenna, and Galen; Averroës also, who composed the great commentary<sup>1</sup>. Of all of them I cannot give a full account, seeing that the length of my theme so urges me onward, that oftentimes my tale falls short of the reality. The company of six is reduced to two<sup>2</sup>: my wise Guide leads me by another way out of the tranquil air into that which trembles; and I enter a region where no light appears.

## CANTO V. THE SECOND CIRCLE

Thus from the first Circle did I descend into the second, The second Circle; Minos the judge. which incloses a narrower space, and correspondingly greater pain, which incites the sufferers to lamentation. There stands Minos<sup>3</sup> in dread guise and gnashes his teeth: he investigates the sins at the entrance, passes judgement, and dispatches the criminal according to the number of the folds he ties. I mean that, when the ill-fated spirit comes into his presence, it makes a full confession; and that investigator of their misdeeds perceives what place in Hell is appointed for it, and girds himself with his tail as many times as are the stages that he wills it should descend. Many such are ever standing

<sup>1</sup> His famous commentary on the works of Aristotle.

<sup>2</sup> Of the six poets only Dante and Virgil remain.

<sup>3</sup> Minos, the judge of the dead, is a figure borrowed from classical mythology. One or more such personages are attached to each of the Circles of Hell, and usually a resemblance is traceable between the Figure and the sin punished in the Circle where he is found; in the present instance, however, there is no such resemblance. The grotesqueness of these beings is largely due to the view that the heathen gods were devils; 1 Cor. x. 20. The introduction of figures of the pagan Tartarus into the Christian Hell is found in mediaeval Latin literature of an earlier date than Dante's time; see Gaspary, *History of Early Italian Literature*, tr. by Oelsner, p. 29.



before him : each in his turn they come to judgement ; they speak, they hear, and anon they are flung below. ‘O thou who comest to the doleful abode,’ said Minos to me when he beheld me, ceasing from the discharge of that dread function, ‘beware how thou enterest, and in whom thou trustest ; let not the spaciousness of the entrance deceive thee.’ And to him my Leader : ‘Why dost persist in clamouring ? Hinder not his divinely appointed journey ; it is so willed there, where power accompanies will : do thou inquire no further.’

Spirits  
of the  
incontinent.

Now do the strains of woe begin to reach mine ears ; now have I arrived at a place where manifold lamentations assail me. I entered a region devoid of all light, which bellows like the ocean in a storm, when it is encountered by opposing winds. The infernal hurricane, which never is at rest, bears along the spirits with its furious rush, and tossing them and smiting harasses them<sup>1</sup>. When they find themselves face to face with the turmoil, thereupon their shrieks and moans and lamentations arise ; blasphemies withal against the power of God. I understood that those condemned to this form of torment are the carnal sinners, who make their reason the slave of their desires. And as in the cold season the starlings are borne on the wing outspread in a dense flock, so by that blast are the guilty spirits borne : this way and that, upwards and downwards it carries them ; never are they soothed by any hope of less suffering, I say not of repose. And as the cranes fly chanting their dirges, and form a long line in the

<sup>1</sup> Throughout the scheme of the *Inferno* a correspondence, either real or symbolical, is traceable between the sins which are expiated and the retributory punishments. In the present instance the wild and ceaseless movement to which the unchaste are exposed represents the uncontrolled passion and restless want of self-command which they displayed in their lifetime.

sky, so saw I approach with cries of woe shades that were borne by the aforesaid rush; wherefore I said: 'Master, who are those folk whom the darkling air chastizes so?' 'The first of those concerning whom thou desirest to be informed,' he then replied to me, 'was queen of many tongues. To the vice of wantonness she was so abandoned, that in her law she made desire the rule of right, to remove the scandal into which she had fallen. She is Semiramis, of whom it is recorded, that she succeeded Ninus and was his spouse: she possessed the country which is under the Sultan's sway<sup>1</sup>. The next is she who for love slew herself, and broke her faith with Sichaeus' ashes; then follows Cleopatra the profligate. Behold Helen, for whose sake so many years of sorrow rolled; behold too the great Achilles, whose last antagonist was love. Behold Paris and Tristan<sup>2</sup>': and a thousand shades and more did he show me, designating them with his finger, who were severed from our life by love.

After hearing my Instructor name the ancient dames and cavaliers compassion seized me, and I was as one distraught. Then I began: 'Poet, I would gladly speak to those twain<sup>3</sup> who go in company, and appear to be so light before the wind.' And he to me: 'Thou shalt see when they are

Paolo and  
Francesca.

<sup>1</sup> The country here meant must be Egypt, which in Dante's time was governed by the Mameluke Sultans. As Semiramis was queen of Assyria, it has been suggested, in explanation, that Dante believed that Semiramis extended her kingdom so as to include Egypt.

<sup>2</sup> The nephew of King Mark of Cornwall, who fell in love with Iseult, whom he was commissioned to escort from her home in Ireland to be the bride of his uncle. By him Tristan was slain.

<sup>3</sup> According to the version of the story here given Francesca was married for reasons of state to Giovanni Malatesta of Rimini, but was in love with his brother Paolo; and some time after his marriage Giovanni surprised his wife and his brother together, and slew them both.

nearer to us; and then do thou beseech them by that love which conducts them, and they will come.' So soon as the wind inclined them towards us I thus bespake: 'Ye weary souls, come to converse with us, if Another<sup>1</sup> forbids it not.' Even as doves at the call of love, with their wings upraised and still, come through the air to their sweet nest wafted by their desire; in such wise they issued from the company where Dido is, coming towards us through the rank air, such was the power of the sympathetic cry. 'Thou gracious, kindly being, who traversest the murky air, visiting us who dyed the world with hues of blood, if the ruler of the universe were propitious to us, we would pray him to grant thee peace, for that thou pitiest our distracting woe. That which thou wouldst fain hear and speak of, we will hear and will speak of to you, so long as the wind is silent, as now it is. The city<sup>2</sup> where I was born lies on the seashore, where the Po descends to take its repose with its attendant streams. Love, that in a gentle heart is quickly kindled, seized this one for the fair person, that was taken from me in a manner which distresses me still<sup>3</sup>. Love, which never exempts from love the loved object, seized me with such force for this one's charm, that, as thou seest, it doth not even now desert me. Love it was that led us to a common death: Cain is awaiting him who extinguished our lives<sup>4</sup>.' These were the words which they addressed to us. After listening to those suffering souls I looked downward, and remained with down-cast eyes, until at last the Poet said to me: 'What art thou

<sup>1</sup> God.

<sup>2</sup> Ravenna.

<sup>3</sup> The suddenness of her death left no time for repentance.

<sup>4</sup> The meaning is—Cain, the first fratricide, awaits our murderer in the portion of the ninth Circle, called from him *la Caina*, where those who have violated the bond of relationship are punished.



pondering?' When I replied, I thus began: 'Alas! how many sweet thoughts, how great longing brought those beings to the woful strait!' Then turning me toward them I spake, and said: 'Francesca, thy anguish makes me sad and compassionate even to tears. But tell me; at the time of those sweet sighs by what token, and in what way, did Love grant that thou shouldst realize thy unconfessed desires?' And she to me: 'There is no greater suffering, than to recall in misery the time of happiness; and this thy Teacher<sup>1</sup> knows. But if thou art so eager to learn the starting-point of our love, I will do as he doth who weeps and speaks withal. We were reading for pleasure one day of Lancelot, how love mastered him; we were alone and devoid of all fear. Many a time did that reading impel our eyes to meet, and take the colour from our cheeks, but one point only was that which overpowered us. When we read how by that noble lover the longed-for smile was kissed, this one, who never shall be severed from me, kissed me on the lips all trembling. The book and its author played the part of Gallehaut<sup>2</sup>: that day we read no further therein.' While the one spirit spake these words, the other uttered such a cry of woe that I fainted as if dying, and fell as a dead body falls.

## CANTO VI. THE THIRD CIRCLE

When my mind returned, after having succumbed at the sight of the two relations' piteous lot, which blurred all my thoughts with grief, I see around me fresh sufferings and fresh sufferers, where'er I move, where'er I turn, where'er

The third  
Circle,  
of the  
gluttonous;  
Cerberus.

<sup>1</sup> Virgil, who looks back regretfully from Limbo to the pleasures of his life on earth.

<sup>2</sup> The intermediary between Lancelot and Guinevere.

I gaze. I am in the third Circle, that of the everlasting, accursed, cold and grievous rain, unchanging in its measure and its consistency. Big hailstones, dark water, and snow pour down through the murky air; the ground whereon this falls is rotten. Cerberus, a cruel and portentous monster, barks like a dog with his three throats over the folk who here are plunged in Hell. His eyes are crimson, his beard black and greasy, his belly huge, and his hands armed with claws; he lacerates the spirits, mumbles them in his jaws and rends them. The rain causes them to howl like dogs; they screen one side with the other, oftentimes shifting themselves, the godforsaken wretches. When Cerberus, the great reptile, was ware of us, he opened his mouths<sup>1</sup> and displayed to us his tusks; not one of his limbs could he keep from quivering. Then my Leader stretched out his palms, and took of the earth, and flung it in handfuls into those voracious gullets. Even as a dog, which bays with ravenous hunger, becomes quiet so soon as he is gnawing his food, being intent only on fiercely devouring it, so was it with those foul faces of the demon Cerberus, who stuns the souls so that they would fain be deaf,

Ciaccio, the  
Florentine  
gourmand.

We passed along over the shades which are prostrated by the grievous rain, and planted our footsteps on their vain semblance, which wears the aspect of a real body. They all were lying on the ground, save one, who raised himself into a sitting posture the moment he saw us pass in front of him. 'O thou, who art being conducted through this region of Hell,' said he to me, 'recognize me, if thou canst: thou wast made ere I was unmade'.<sup>1</sup> And I to him: 'The sufferings that thou endurest haply withdraw thee from my memory, so that I trow not that I have ever seen thee. But tell me, who

<sup>1</sup> Dante was born in 1265; Ciaccio died in 1286.

art thou, that art set in so dismal a spot, and to such a punishment, that if others are worse none is so distasteful?' And he to me: 'Thy city, which is so full of jealousy that now the sack runs over, had me as an inmate in the tranquil life. Ye my fellow citizens were wont to call me Ciacco<sup>1</sup>: for the noxious sin of gluttony, as thou seest, I bend before the rain; and as a soul in pain I am not alone, for all these are exposed to a like penalty for like iniquity': and at that word he ceased. I answered him: 'Ciacco, thy affliction lies so heavy upon me that it incites me to weep: but tell me, if thou knowest, to what issue the citizens of the divided city will come; whether any there is upright: tell me too wherefore such dread discord hath assailed it.' And he to me: 'After long contention they will come to bloodshed<sup>2</sup>, and the boorish party will expel the other with much contumely. But soon thereafter, before three suns have run their course, this one is destined to fall, and the other to take the higher place by the support of one who at this moment is trimming<sup>3</sup>. For a long season will it show a haughty front, oppressing the other by heavy burdens, however much it be distressed and ashamed thereat. Two men<sup>4</sup> are upright, but they get no hearing there: pride, envy and avarice are the three sparks which have set men's hearts aflame.' At this point he ceased his tearful utterance.

And I to him: 'Prithee still further instruct me, and

<sup>1</sup> This nickname was a corruption of Giacomo.

<sup>2</sup> The two parties here spoken of were the White and the Black Guelfs, the former of whom were headed by the Cerchi, the latter by the Donati. The White Guelfs are called 'the boorish party' because the Cerchi, who had lately come from the country into the city, bore that character.

<sup>3</sup> Boniface VIII is meant, who in 1300 professed to be a neutral as between the Whites and Blacks, and in 1302 supported Charles of Valois.

<sup>4</sup> Who these were is not known.

Distin-  
guished  
Florentines  
in Hell.

grant me the boon of other words of thine. Farinata and Tegghiaio, who were so worthy, Jacopo Rusticucci, Arrigo and Mosca<sup>1</sup>, and the others who set their minds on right doing, tell me where they are, and enable me to recognize them; for I am seized by strong desire to know whether Heaven bestows its sweets or Hell its poisons on them.' And he: 'They are among the blackest spirits; by various forms of sin they are sunk downward to the depths: if thou descendest so far, it will be in thy power to see them. But when thou art once more in the sweet world, I pray thee recall me to the minds of men: no more I say to thee, no more I answer thee.' His fixed eyes he then turned askance; for a while he regarded me, and then he drooped his head: so he fell head foremost to the level of the other blind folk. And my Guide said to me: 'He rises no more before the sound of the angelic trump; when the hostile Power<sup>2</sup> shall come, each shall repair again to the sad tomb, shall resume his form of flesh, and hear the doom that resounds for eternity.'

Increase  
of the  
torments in  
the future  
life.

So with slow steps did we pass onward through the shades and the rain so foully mixed, touching on points in the future life: whereupon I said: 'These torments, my Master, will they increase after the dread sentence, or will they be lessened, or will they be as painful as now?' And he to me: 'Betake thee to thy philosophy<sup>3</sup>, which avers that, in proportion as a thing is more perfect, it hath greater appreciation of good, and in like manner of pain. Albeit this accursed folk can never attain true perfection, it expects to be more perfect after than before.' We pursued that track in a circle, talking far

<sup>1</sup> With the exception of Arrigo all these personages are introduced later in the *Inferno*.

<sup>2</sup> Christ.

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle is meant.



more than I report, and reached the point where the ground descends; there we found Pluto the great enemy.

## CANTO VII. THE FOURTH AND FIFTH CIRCLES

‘Pape Satan, pape Satan aleppe<sup>1</sup>,’ thus with his grating voice Pluto<sup>2</sup> began. And that noble Sage, who knew all things, said to console me: ‘Let not thy fear distress thee, for, however great his power, he shall not prevent thy descending this rock.’ Thereupon he turned him toward that arrogant visage, saying: ‘Silence, accursed wolf; gnaw thine own heart in thy fury. ’Tis not without cause that we descend to the abyss: it is so decreed on high, where Michael, as thou knowest, exacted vengeance for the proud deed of whoredom<sup>3</sup>.’ As sails that are inflated by the wind fall in a heap so soon as it breaks the mast, so fell to earth that savage monster. Thus did we descend into the fourth depression, advancing along the doleful bank, which contains the wickedness of the whole universe.

Ah! justice of God, what power can bring together all the strange inflictions and penalties which I beheld? And wherefore doth our guilt thus consume us? As on the surface of Charybdis wave meeting wave breaks against it, so is it ordained for the folk who here dance in a ring. In this place I saw on either hand people more numerous than elsewhere, by the force of their chests rolling forward weights to

<sup>1</sup> These words are meaningless, but they seem to have conveyed some kind of threat.

<sup>2</sup> By Pluto here Plutus, the god of wealth, is intended, and in this character he is the guardian of the Circle where avarice is punished.

<sup>3</sup> The revolt of the rebellious angels.

Pluto; the fourth Circle.

The avaricious and the prodigal.

the sound of loud cries<sup>1</sup>. With a shock they met, and then on the very spot each of them faced round to return, exclaiming: 'Why dost hold?' and: 'Why dost squander?' Thus along the dismal Circle<sup>2</sup> they withdrew on either hand to the opposite point, shouting at one another, as before, their opprobrious refrain; anon each turned him, when, following his half-circle, he had reached the other tilting-place. Then said I, wellnigh heartbroken at the sight: 'My Master, explain to me now what folk these are, and whether they all were priests, these tonsured persons on our left hand.' And he to me: 'In their former life they were all so perverse in mind, that they observed no moderation in their use of money there. Clearly enough do their voices proclaim this, when they reach the two points of the Circle, where the contrast of their sins causes them to separate. These who have no covering of hair on their heads were priests, and popes and cardinals, in whom avarice culminates.' And I: 'Master, in this class I should surely be able to recognize some who were polluted by the forms of guilt thou speakest of.' And he to me: 'Vain is the thought thou conceivest. The purblind life which defiled them renders them now obscure to all recognition. Evermore will they come to the two jousts; they will rise again from the tomb, the one with closed fists, the other with close-cut hair<sup>3</sup>. Wrong giving and wrong keeping have deprived them of the beauteous world and set them to this tussle: to describe it I seek for no complimentary

<sup>1</sup> The weights here symbolize amassed riches, and the fruitlessness of the sinners' toil the vain pursuit of wealth. The opposing bands are formed of the avaricious and the prodigal respectively.

<sup>2</sup> This is the complete Circle of Hell, each of the two companies passing through half the Circle, and meeting the other at opposite points.

<sup>3</sup> An Italian proverbial expression describes a prodigal as one who has squandered everything, even to the hair of his head.

words. Now mayst thou estimate, my son, the transient farce of the gifts that are placed in Fortune's hands, for the sake of which mankind hustle one another; for all the gold that is beneath the moon, and all that hath been, could not minister repose to one of these weary souls.<sup>1</sup>

'Master,' said I to him, 'prithee tell me further; this Fortune, to whom thou dost refer, what is she, that she hath worldly blessings thus in her keeping?' And he to me: 'Ye senseless beings, how great is the ignorance which afflicts you! Now see thou lay to heart my judgement on this subject'. He whose wisdom surpasses all things, created the Heavens, and assigned to them guiding spirits, so that each Order of those spirits illuminates each part of the Heavens, dispensing its light in due proportions: in like manner for the splendours of the world He ordained a general directress and guide, who at the fitting time should transfer these misnamed blessings from people to people and from race to race, in such wise that no human wisdom can prevent it. Hence it is that one people rules and another languishes, in accordance with her judgement, which is hidden, even as the snake in the grass. Your wisdom is powerless to oppose her: she provides, and judges, and carries on her domain, as the other divinities do theirs. Her changes have no cessation; necessity causes her to move swiftly; hence the succession of those who win their turn is rapid. She is the Power which is so greatly vilified by the very persons who ought to praise her, while they blame her amiss and vituperate her. But she

<sup>1</sup> Dante here describes Fortune as an Intelligence appointed by God, which orders the course of events in the world, in the same way as the other Intelligences—i.e. the Angelic Orders—determine the motions and influences of the planetary spheres. For these Intelligences cp. *Par.* xxviii. 25 foll.

is blessed and hears not this: in company with the other primal creations she joyfully turns her sphere, and rejoices in her blessedness. Now let us descend to direr suffering; already every star is setting which was rising when I set forth, and we may no longer delay.'

The Stygian  
marsh; the  
fifth Circle,  
of the  
wrathful.

We crossed the Circle to the opposite bank above a fountain<sup>1</sup>, which gushes forth and pours down through a dike which draws its stream thence. The water was darker far than purple; and we, following alongside the gloomy waves, passed on and downward by a weird track. This dismal rivulet forms a marsh named the Stygian marsh, when it reaches the foot of the ill-omened grey declivities. And as I stood intently gazing, I saw in that slough folk mud-begrimed, naked all of them and with suffering looks. These were smiting one another not with their hands alone, but with their heads, their chests and feet, rending their foes piece-meal with their teeth. The kindly Master said: 'My son, thou seest now the spirits of those who were mastered by anger: and withal I would have thee believe for sure, that beneath the water there are folk who breathe<sup>2</sup>; and they cause the surface thereof to bubble, as thine eye tells thee, whithersoever it turns. Planted in the mud they say: "Gloomy were we in the sweet air, which is gladdened by the sun, with a load of cloudy apathy in our hearts; now we despond in the midst of the black slime." This hymn they gurgle in their throat, for with articulate words they cannot say it.' Thus did we follow a great arc of the filthy pool, between the dry bank and the swamp, with our eyes turned towards those who swallow the mire, and we reached the foot of a tower at last.

<sup>1</sup> The fountain of the Styx.

<sup>2</sup> These are the spirits of the sullenly despondent.



CANTO VIII. THE FIFTH CIRCLE.

Pursuing my theme I say, that long ere we reached the foot of the lofty tower<sup>1</sup> our eyes were directed upward to its summit, by reason of two cressets which we saw placed there, while another signalled a reply from so far away that the eye could scarce catch it. And turning me to the sea of all wisdom I said: 'What means this sign? And what answer is given by that other fire? And who are they that make it?' And he to me: 'Over the foul water thou canst already discern the expected object, if the exhalation from the marsh doth not hide it from thee.' Never did arrow impelled by the bowstring speed so swiftly through the air, as a tiny vessel which I saw coming towards us at that moment through the water under the guidance of a single helmsman, who cried: 'Ha! art thou come, thou guilty soul?' 'Phlegyas<sup>2</sup>, Phlegyas,' said my Lord, 'this time thou criest in vain; thou shalt not detain us longer than while crossing the muddy pool.' Like one who hears of a great fraud that hath been practised on him, whereby anon his indignation is aroused, such in his concentrated fury did Phlegyas become. My Guide stepped down into the boat, and then made me enter after him, nor did it seem freighted until I was on board. So soon as my Guide and I were in the vessel, the ancient prow started on its course, ploughing the water more deeply than is its wont with others<sup>3</sup>.

Phlegyas  
and his  
boat.

While we were traversing the deathly channel, there ap- Filippo  
Argenti.

<sup>1</sup> The tower is the signalling station for the city of Dis, which lies on the further side of the Stygian marsh.

<sup>2</sup> Phlegyas is the guardian and ferryman of the Stygian marsh.

<sup>3</sup> Because of the weight of Dante's body.

peared in front of me one grimed with mud<sup>1</sup>, who said: 'Who art thou, that comest before thy time?' And I to him: 'If I come, I do not stay; but who art thou, that art so befouled?' He answered: 'Thou seest that I am one who weeps.' And I to him: 'In weeping and in wailing, accursed spirit, do thou abide, for I recognize thee, albeit thou art wholly foul.' Then did he reach forth both his hands toward the vessel; whereupon my Master, being ware of it, dashed him off, saying: 'Away with thee, there with the other hounds.' Then round my neck he threw his arms, and kissed me on the face, and said: 'Indignant soul, blessed is she who conceived thee. This one in life was a haughty being; there is no kindliness to adorn his memory; here in like manner his shade is passionate. How many in the world above are now deemed mighty monarchs, who here will stand like swine in the mire, leaving behind them the loathing of their dread crimes!' And I: 'Master, it would please me well to see him soused in this wash or ever we quit the pond.' And he to me: 'Ere the bank comes in sight thou shalt be satisfied; rightfully shalt thou have the fruition of such a desire.' Not long thereafter I saw such havoc made of him by the mud-stained folk, that even now I praise and thank God for it. With one voice they shouted: 'Make for Filippo Argenti!' and that passionate Florentine spirit turned upon himself with his teeth.

The city of  
Dis; the  
rebel angels.

There we left him, so that I say no more of him; but a sound of lamentation smote upon mine ears, whereupon with eyes wide open I gaze in front of me. The kindly Master said: 'Now, my son, the city named Dis<sup>2</sup> is close at hand,

<sup>1</sup> Filippo Argenti, who is here introduced, was a member of the Adimari family in Florence, who were among Dante's strongest opponents.

<sup>2</sup> The city of Dis comprises the whole of the remainder of Hell, in which the worst malefactors are punished.

with its dire citizens, its vast multitude.' And I: 'Already, Master, I clearly see its mosques within there in the vale, ruddy of hue, as if they had emerged from the fire.' And he said to me: 'The everlasting fire which kindles them within imparts to them that red colour, as thou perceivest in this nether Hell.' We nevertheless passed within the deep moats which intrench that disconsolate city; the walls appeared to me as it were of iron. Not without first making a wide circuit we reached a point, where the helmsman cried aloud to us: 'Go forth; here is the entrance.' On the threshold of the gates I beheld a thousand and more of those rained down from Heaven, who were saying in angry tones: 'Who is this that, while still alive, passes through the realm of the dead?' And my sage Master made sign to them that he would fain speak with them in secret. Then did they somewhat curb their great wrath, and they said: 'Come thou alone, and let that other go his way, who hath so rashly set foot in this realm. Let him return by himself along the foolhardy route; let him make trial whether he knows it, for thou shalt remain here, who hast made plain to him so dark a region.' Bethink thee, Reader, whether I did not lose heart at the sound of those accursed words, for I believed I should nevermore return hither. 'O my beloved Leader, who seven times and more hast restored my confidence, and delivered me from extremity of danger which was facing me, leave me not,' I said, 'in this sad plight: and if further progress is denied us, let us with all speed retrace our steps together.' And that lordly spirit who had conducted me thither said: 'Fear not, for our right of passing no one can deprive us of; so great is the Power that hath granted it to us. But do thou await me here; and support and cherish with good hope thy weary spirit, for I will not leave thee in the lower world.'

They  
oppose  
Virgil.

So the sweet Father departs and leaves me there, while I remain in doubt, so that yea and nay contend within my brain. The words which he addressed to them I could not hear, but he abode not long with them there, ere they raced back one and all within. They closed the gates, those foes of ours, in my Lord's face, and he remained without, and turned him round toward me with lingering steps. His eyes were on the ground, his brows shorn of all confidence, and he sighed as if he would say: 'Who hath denied me the abodes of woe?' And to me he said: 'Be not thou dismayed for all mine anger, for I shall come off victorious, whatever force may muster within to repel me. This temerity on their part is no new thing, for once before they practised it at a more frequented gate, which still remains unfastened. It is over that gate that thou sawest the deathly inscription: and even now on the hither side of it one so mighty is descending the steep, and traversing the Circles unaccompanied, that by his aid the city shall be opened to us.'

## CANTO IX. THE FIFTH AND SIXTH CIRCLES

Virgil  
hesitates.

That hue wherewith cowardice tinged my cheeks when I saw my guide turn round to return, suppressed the sooner within him his own unwonted pallor. He stopped in attention like one who listens, for owing to the dark air and the dense mist, the eye could not lead him far. 'Still we are bound to

' The repulse of Virgil here, followed by the arrival of an angel from heaven who secures Dante's admittance to the city of Dis, is apparently intended to teach, allegorically, that at the greatest crises of our moral life our ordinary means of support fail us, and a special intervention of spiritual aid on our behalf is necessary.



win the day,' he began, 'unless. . . . So great a power was that which offered to aid us. Ah! what weary waiting it seems to me for another to arrive!' I noted well how he cloaked the commencement of his speech with what followed, for these were words irreconcilable with the former notwithstanding, his utterance caused me fear, seeing that I interpreted the unfinished speech more unfavourably perchance than he intended. 'Doth any spirit ever descend into this abyss of the gloomy cavity from the first Circle, the punishment in which is naught but ineffectual hope?'<sup>1</sup> This question I asked, and he replied to me: 'Rarely doth it happen that any of us journeys by the way that I am going. True it is that once before I was here below, forced by the enchantments of that cruel Erichthon<sup>2</sup>, who was wont to recall the shades to their bodies. My flesh had not long been reft of me, when she caused me to pass within that wall, that I might bring forth thence a spirit from Judas' Circle<sup>3</sup>. That is the lowest and the darkest place, and the most remote from the Heaven which sets the whole universe circling<sup>4</sup>: well do I know the way; therefore have confidence. This marsh which exhales the great stench girds around the city of pain, which we cannot now enter without awakening wrath.'

And more he said, but this I remember not; for, following mine eye, my thoughts were wholly concentrated on the lofty tower with the burning summit, where in a moment there

The three  
Furies.

<sup>1</sup> Dante's object in asking this question is to discover whether Virgil himself had ever visited the lower regions of Hell.

<sup>2</sup> Erichthon is the witch who, according to Lucan (*Phars.* vi. 419 foll., 507 foll.), was consulted by Sextus Pompeius before Pharsalia as to the result of that battle, and who summoned up for that purpose the shade of a Pompeian soldier.

<sup>3</sup> The ninth Circle, which is the Pit of Hell.

<sup>4</sup> The ninth Heaven, or *Primum Mobile*.

suddenly upreared themselves three hellish Furies blood-bestained, who had the limbs and the mien of women, and with bright green hydras were begirt; in place of hair they had small horned snakes, wherewith their fierce temples were bound. And he, who clearly recognized the handmaids of the queen of everlasting woe<sup>1</sup>, said to me: 'Behold the fierce Erinnyes. This one on the left side is Megaera; that one who utters lamentations on the right is Alecto; in the middle is Tisiphone:' and thereupon he held his peace. Each one with her nails was rending her breast; they smote themselves with their hands and shrieked so loud, that in fear I drew close to the Poet. 'Let Medusa come, so will we turn him into stone,' said they all with downward glances; 'twas an evil hour when we took no vengeance on Theseus for his assault<sup>2</sup>.' 'Turn thee round, and keep thy face concealed; for if the Gorgon's head is displayed, and thou wert to see it, there would be no hope of thy ever returning to the world above.' Thus spake my Master, and himself turned me, and, not content with the protection of my hands, screened me also with his own. O ye, whose intellect is sound, mark well the lesson that is hidden beneath the veil of these weird lines<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Proserpine.

<sup>2</sup> Theseus went down to Hades with the object of abducting Proserpine, but was seized and detained there as a prisoner. According to the version of the story which Dante has adopted, he was afterwards liberated by Hercules. The Furies here mean to say that, if they had punished Theseus as he deserved, others would not have followed his example and descended into Hell.

<sup>3</sup> The allegory in what precedes turns on the obstacles that here oppose Dante's progress, by which are signified the hindrances which impede the advance of the soul towards repentance and conversion. The Furies represent the recollection of past sins, and the Gorgon's head, which turns men to stone, is the despair produced by that recollection, which per-

And now there was drawing nigh over the turbid waves a commotion, terrific in sound, which caused both the banks to quake, like that of a violent wind aroused by heat in the opposite quarter of the heavens<sup>1</sup>, which smites the forest, and with resistless force rends, beats to earth, and bears away the branches: wrapt in dust it proudly marches onward, and drives in flight the wild beasts and the shepherds. He freed mine eyes, and said: 'Now direct thy visual nerve over yonder ancient foam, there where that smoke is most offensive.' As the frogs before their enemy the snake all hurry away over the water, until each crouches on the ground, so saw I more than a thousand lost souls flying before one, who at the crossing was passing the Styx dryshod. From his face he was warding off that dense atmosphere by waving his left hand often in front of him, and only with that fatigue he appeared weary. Clearly did I perceive that he was a messenger from Heaven, and I turned me to my Master, who signed to me to remain still and make obeisance to him. Ah! how disdainful did he appear to me! He approached the gate, and opened it with a wand, for it had no power of resistance. 'O ye that were expelled from Heaven, despised folk'—thus he began, standing on the dread threshold—'whence comes it that this arrogance finds entrance into your hearts? Wherefore are ye recalcitrant against that will, whose purpose can never be brought to naught, and which more than once hath increased your suffering? What boots it to oppose His decrees? Your Cerberus, if rightly ye

A heavenly messenger repels the devils.

manently hardens the heart. Virgil's causing Dante to turn round and hide his face means that human reason can resist for awhile the temptation to despair by refusing to contemplate it (see the notes to Butler's *Translation*, pp. 103, 104).

<sup>1</sup> This describes the wind rushing in to fill up a vacuum caused by heat.

remember, still hath his chin and throat denuded of hair thereby<sup>1</sup>.’ Then he returned along the foul road, and spake not a word to us, but wore the look of one whose thoughts are painfully engrossed by another interest than his who stands before him. And we advanced toward the city with confidence after hearing those holy words.

The Poets  
enter; the  
sixth Circle,  
of the  
heretics.

There we entered unopposed; and I, eager as I was to behold the state of those inclosed in a fortress of such aspect, so soon as I was within let mine eye range around; and on either hand I see a wide tract, full of suffering and torment dire. As at Arles, where the Rhone stagnates<sup>2</sup>, and as at Pola near the Quarnero, which is the boundary of Italy and laves its confines<sup>3</sup>, the sepulchres make all the ground uneven; so did they there on every side, save that they were fashioned in more painful wise; for between the tombs flames were scattered, whereby they were kindled to such excess of heat, that no handicraft requires iron to be hotter. All their coverings were thrown open, and from them proceeded lamentations so bitter, that in sooth they seemed to be uttered by wretched suffering souls. And I: ‘Master, what folk are these, who, entombed within those coffers, reveal themselves by their sorrowful sighs?’ And he to me: ‘Here are the heresiarchs with their followers of every sect, and far more than thou thinkest are the tombs filled. Like is buried here with like, and the sepulchres burn, some with less, some with

<sup>1</sup> This refers to Hercules having chained Cerberus and dragged him to the upper world; his chin and throat were then lacerated by the chain.

<sup>2</sup> At Arles the Rhone divides, and begins to form the marshy delta of the Camargue. The cemetery there, which is here referred to, was called *Alyseamps* (*Elysii Campi*).

<sup>3</sup> The province of Istria, in which Pola lies, and which is bounded on the east by the Gulf of Quarnero, formed part of Italy in Dante’s time.



greater heat.' And after he had turned to the right hand, we passed between the torments and the lofty battlements.

## CANTO X. THE SIXTH CIRCLE

Now doth my Master wend his way by a secluded path The Epicureans. between the wall of the city and the torments, and I follow his footsteps. 'Thou power sublime, who dost lead me round through the guilty Circles,' I began, 'speak to me at thy pleasure, and satisfy my longings. The folk who lie within the sepulchres, is it possible to see them? Even now the coverings are all thrown open, and no one is keeping guard.' And he to me: 'They will all be closed, when they return hither from the Valley of Judgement<sup>1</sup> with their bodies which they have left in the world above. On this side lies the burial-place of Epicurus and all his followers, who hold that the soul dies with the body. Wherefore the request which thou makest of me shall soon find satisfaction here within, and likewise the wish that thou dost not mention to me.' And I: 'Kind Leader, if I forbear to reveal my heart to thee, 'tis only in order that my words may be few; nor is this the only occasion on which thou hast so inclined me.'

'O Tuscan, who passest alive through the city of fire using Farinata degli Uberti. speech so dignified, prithee pause at this spot. Thy language reveals thee as a native of that noble fatherland, to which maybe I was too injurious<sup>2</sup>.' Such was the sound which

<sup>1</sup> The Valley of Jehoshaphat at Jerusalem, which is spoken of by the prophet Joel (iii. 2, 12) as the place where God will hold judgement; from this it came to be regarded as the scene of the final judgement.

<sup>2</sup> Farinata, who is here speaking, was in the middle of the thirteenth century the head of the family of the Uberti, who were the leaders of the Ghibelline party in Florence. The occasion on which he was 'too

suddenly issued from one of the coffers, whereat in fear I drew somewhat nearer to my Master's side. And he said to me: 'Turn thee; what ails thee? See there Farinata, who hath upraised himself; from the waist upwards thou wilt behold him completely.' Mine eyes were already fixed on his face; and he uplifted his breast and his forehead, as if he treated Hell with great contempt; and my Leader with his vigorous and ready hands impelled me between the sepulchres towards him, saying: 'Let thy words be well considered.' So soon as I reached the foot of his tomb, he regarded me awhile, and then with a touch of disdain inquired of me: 'Who were thine ancestors?' For my part, anxious as I was to comply with him, I kept not back the truth, but fully disclosed it to him; whereupon he raised his eyebrows slightly, and anon he said: 'Fiercely were they opposed to me and to my forefathers and to my party, so that on two occasions I put them to flight.' 'If they were driven out, they returned from every quarter,' I replied to him, 'both the first and the second time; but your<sup>1</sup> family learnt not well that art.'

Cavalcante  
de' Cavalcanti.

Then alongside of this shade there arose another<sup>2</sup>, revealed to view as far as his chin; methinks he had lifted himself on to his knees. He looked all round me, as it were eager to see whether another were accompanying me; but when his scrutiny had come to naught he said with tears: 'If through sublimity of genius thou traversest this dark prison, where injurious' to that city was when, after his expulsion in 1258, he retired to Siena, where he and his fellow exiles concerted the measures which led to the great defeat of the Florentine Guelphs at Montaperti.

<sup>1</sup> Both here, and where Cavalcante is addressed below, and elsewhere in the poem, the plural 'your' and 'you' are used for 'thine' and 'thou' as a mark of respect for dignity.

<sup>2</sup> Cavalcante, the father of Dante's friend the poet Guido Cavalcanti, who married Farinata's daughter.

is my son, and why is he not with thee?' And I to him: 'I come not of mine own will: he who is in waiting there conducts me through this region—the same whom haply your Guido treated slightly.' His words and the nature of his punishment had already disclosed to me this spirit's name; thus it was that mine answer was so explicit. On a sudden he raised himself up and cried: 'How saidst thou, "He treated"? Is he not still alive? Doth not the sweet light fall upon his eyes?' When he perceived that I paused awhile before replying, he fell backward and was no more seen.

But that other heroic spirit, at whose desire I had stopped, neither changed countenance, nor bowed his neck, nor winced. 'And if,' said he, pursuing his previous speech, 'if they have learnt that art amiss, that torments me more than doth this bed. But the face of the dame who is queen in this realm<sup>1</sup> shall not be rekindled fifty times, ere thou shalt know the difficulty of that art. And—so mayst thou hereafter return to the sweet world—say, wherefore is that people in all its enactments so merciless toward my kindred?' Whereupon I replied: 'The rout and the dire massacre which dyed red the Arbia<sup>2</sup>, causes such addresses to be made in our sanctuary.' After shaking his head with a sigh he said: 'On that occasion I was not alone, and verily I should not without justification have set forth with the others; but there, where every one consented to exterminate Florence, I alone was the man who openly defended her<sup>3</sup>.' 'So may your descendants hereafter

Farinata  
announces  
Dante's  
impending  
misfortunes.

<sup>1</sup> Hecate, who is identified by Dante with Proserpine as the goddess who rules in Hell; here she represents the moon, according to the view of ancient mythology.

<sup>2</sup> The river which flows by the battlefield of Montaperti.

<sup>3</sup> When the Ghibellines in council proposed the destruction of Florence, Farinata opposed it single-handed.

find repose'—thus I besought him—'pray untie for me the knot, which here has entangled my judgement. It appears, if I understand aright, that ye foresee what time is bringing in its train, but in respect of present events it is otherwise with you.' 'We see,' said he, 'like one that hath imperfect sight the things that are at a distance from us; such a measure of light doth the supreme Ruler still vouchsafe us. When they draw nigh or happen, our intellect is wholly at fault, and unless another brings us tidings we know nothing of your mortal state. Hence mayst thou understand, that from the moment when the gate of the future is closed to us our knowledge will be totally extinguished.' Then said I, as being conscience-stricken for my remissness: 'Now prithee tell him who sank below that his son is still in the number of the living. And if erewhile I failed to reply, inform him that the reason was, that my thoughts were even then occupied by the perplexing question which you have solved for me.' And now my Master was recalling me, wherefore with more eager haste I prayed the spirit to tell me who were in his company. He said to me: 'I lie in this place with a thousand souls and more: within here is the second Frederic<sup>1</sup> and the Cardinal<sup>2</sup>; concerning the others I hold my peace.' Thereupon he hid himself; and I turned my steps toward the ancient Poet, musing on that speech which appeared unfriendly to me. He moved onward, and then even as he went he said to me: 'Wherefore art thou so lost in thought?' And I replied to his question in full. 'Store up in thy mind what thou hast heard against thyself'—such was that Sage's bidding—'and now fix thy thoughts on what lies before thee;'

<sup>1</sup> Frederic II was regarded by his contemporaries as a heretic.

<sup>2</sup> Cardinal Ottaviano degli Ubaldini; he is reported to have said that, if he had a soul, he had lost it a thousand times in behalf of the Ghibellines.



and he pointed with his finger. 'When thou art in the presence of the sweet ray of that Lady<sup>1</sup> from whose beauteous eye naught is hidden, thou shalt learn from her the journey of thy life.' Thereupon he turned his steps leftward; we quitted the wall, and proceeded toward the middle by a path that leads to a valley, which even to that height sent forth its offensive stench.

## CANTO XI. CLASSIFICATION OF SINS

On the edge of a lofty bank formed by huge rocks broken all around we reached a point overlooking a throng of more woeful sufferers; and there, owing to the dire excess of the stench emitted by the profound abyss, we shrank behind the covering of a great tomb, where I saw an inscription which said: 'I guard Pope Anastasius<sup>2</sup>, whom Photinus seduced from the right path.' 'Tis well that our descent should be slow, so that our senses may at first accustom themselves somewhat to the bitter blast, and afterward may not heed it.' So spake the Master; and to him I said: 'Devise some compensation, that the time may not be wasted;' and he: 'Lo! that is in my thoughts.'

Anon he thus began: 'Within these rocks, my son, are three little Circles, descending in gradation, like those which thou hast passed. All of them are filled with accursed spirits; but in order that henceforth the sight of them by itself may suffice thee, give ear while I tell thee the system

<sup>1</sup> Beatrice.

<sup>2</sup> Anastasius II, who was Pope in 496-8. In consequence of a visit which was paid to him by Photinus, a deacon of Thessalonica, the story afterwards arose, on the authority of Gratian, that he was persuaded to heresy by Photinus.

Pope  
Anastasius.

The sins  
punished  
in the  
lower Hell.

and the reason of their durance. Of all wrong dealing which incurs the aversion of Heaven injury is the object, and every such object distresses men either by violence or fraud. But inasmuch as fraud is a sin peculiar to man, it is more displeasing to God, and for this reason the fraudulent hold the lower place, and are afflicted by greater pain. The first Circle is occupied wholly by the violent: but seeing that there are three classes of persons to whom violence can be done, it is so arranged as to form three separate rings. Violence can be done to God, to oneself, and to one's neighbour—in their persons, I mean, and in their substance, as by clear argument will be explained to thee. Violent death and grievous wounds are inflicted on one's neighbour, and on his possessions devastation, arson, and wrongful exactions; hence murderers and those who smite wrongfully, pillagers also and robbers, are all tormented in divers companies in the first ring. A man may lay violent hands on himself and on his goods; and consequently in the second ring unavailing remorse is the lot of every one who deprives himself of your world, squanders and dissipates his possessions, and laments when he should be cheerful. Violence can be offered to the Deity by denying Him in one's heart and blaspheming Him, and by despising Nature and His goodness; wherefore the smallest ring stamps with its seal both Sodom<sup>1</sup> and Cahors<sup>2</sup>, and those who speak in their heart in contempt of God. Fraud, a sin which never fails to touch the conscience, may be employed by a man against one who trusts him, or against one who doth not repose confidence

<sup>1</sup> Sodom represents those who do violence to Nature; Gen. xix. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Cahors in the south of France was one of the most noted seats of usury in the middle ages, and usury was regarded by Dante as violence applied to the gifts of nature, or wealth.

in him<sup>1</sup>. The latter form, thou seest, destroys only the natural bond of love; whence the second Circle is the abode of hypocrisy, flattery and witchcraft, of falsification, theft and simony, of panders, jobbers and such-like filth. By the other form both the natural love is ignored, and that subsequently accruing to it, wherefrom the special bond of faith proceeds; and consequently in the smallest Circle<sup>2</sup>, where is the centre of the universe, the throne of Dis, all traitors are eternally consumed.'

And I: 'Master, the course of thy reasoning is quite clear, and full well doth it describe this gulf and the folk who occupy it. But tell me: the spirits in the foul marsh, those borne by the wind, and those lashed by the rain, and the others who when they meet use such rough words, why are not they punished within the fiery-red city, if God regards them with anger? And if he doth not, wherefore are they in such a case?' And he to me: 'Why doth thy mind wander so far from its wonted good sense? or on what object in another direction are thy thoughts fixed? Dost thou not remember the terms in which thy *Ethics*<sup>3</sup> treats of the three states of mind which Heaven condemns—incontinence, fraud and unreasoning bestiality? and how incontinence offends God less and receives less blame? If thou payest good heed to this judgement, and recallest to thy mind who these spirits are that endure chastisement above in the outer Hell, thou wilt readily see wherefore they are dissociated

The sins  
punished  
in the  
upper Hell.

<sup>1</sup> In other words, fraud is of two kinds, according as it violates or does not violate some special bond of confidence, such as the ties of friendship or country.

<sup>2</sup> The ninth Circle, which is the Pit of Hell.

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle's *Ethics*, vii. 1, 1, Dante's familiarity with which treatise is expressed by 'thy.'

from these fell souls, and wherefore God's vengeance smites them with less severity.'

The sin of  
usury.

'Thou Sun, who curest every defect of sight, thy explanations satisfy me so, that doubting gives me no less pleasure than knowing. Once more return awhile in thought,' said I, 'to the place where thou sayst that usury offends the divine goodness, and untie the knot.' 'Philosophy,' he said to me, 'if one gives attentive heed to her, points out, and that in more than one branch of the subject, that Nature derives her method from the mind of God and His mode of working; and, if thou studiest thy Physics<sup>1</sup> aright, thou wilt find not far from the beginning that your art, so far as its power admits, follows Nature, as the scholar doth his master; so that your art is, so to speak, the grandchild of God. From these two, if thou recall to mind the commencement of Genesis<sup>2</sup>, it is fitting that mankind should gain their livelihood and should prosper. And since the usurer pursues a different course, he depreciates Nature both in herself and in her imitator, inasmuch as he reposes his hope on somewhat else. But follow me now, since I am desirous to proceed, for the Fishes are quivering above the horizon<sup>3</sup>, and the Wain lies right over the north-west, and in that direction some distance onward is the descent of the ridge of rock.'

<sup>1</sup> *Ar. Phys. ii. 2, 7.*

<sup>2</sup> The passages in Genesis here referred to are (1) Gen. ii. 15, which mentions the Divine appointment in the Garden of Eden that men should get their livelihood from *nature*, i.e. natural fruits; and (2) Gen. iii. 19. 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,' which implies that they should get their livelihood by *artificial means*.

<sup>3</sup> The Fishes are the sign of the Zodiac which precedes Aries, in which the sun now was; consequently the time intended is some time before sunrise (perhaps 3 a.m.) on Easter Eve.



CANTO XII. THE SEVENTH CIRCLE;  
FIRST RING

The place which we reached in order to descend the bank was wild, and, by reason of the other object that was there, was such as every eye would shun. As is that rock-fall <sup>1</sup>, which on the hither side of Trent struck the Adige in flank, either through earthquake or through failure of support; for from the summit of the mountain, whence it started, to the level ground so shattered is the rock, that it would afford a practicable track to one who was above: such was the descent of that chasm. And on the edge of the broken hollow lay outstretched the infamy of Crete <sup>2</sup>, which was conceived in the fictitious cow; and at the sight of us he bit himself, like one overpowered within by passion. My Sage cried out to him: 'Thinkest thou perchance that the Duke of Athens <sup>3</sup> is here, who in the world above caused thy death? Away with thee, monster, for this man comes not tutored by thy sister <sup>4</sup>, but is journeying that he may see your punishments.' Even as the bull, which breaks its tether at the moment when it hath received its mortal wound, being powerless to walk plunges from side to side, so frenzied did the Minotaur appear to me. And Virgil perceiving this cried: 'Speed thee to the passage; while he is in fury 'tis

The seventh Circle, first ring; the Minotaur.

<sup>1</sup> The Slavini di Marco near Roveredo, about fifteen miles below Trent.

<sup>2</sup> The Minotaur; he is called 'the infamy of Crete' because of his origin from a bull and Pasiphaë, who with a view to that criminal connexion entered the figure of a wooden cow. Symbolically, he represents force and fury.

<sup>3</sup> Theseus, who killed the Minotaur.

<sup>4</sup> Ariadne, who was daughter of Pasiphaë by Minos; she instructed Theseus in killing the Minotaur.

well for thee to descend.' Thus did we make our way downward over that fallen mass of stones, which often moved beneath my feet through the unwonted weight.

The  
rock-fall.

I was pondering as I went; and he said: 'Haply thou art thinking of this ruin, which is guarded by that monster whose fury I but now extinguished. I would have thee know, then, that what time I descended here before into the lower Hell<sup>1</sup>, this rock had not yet fallen. But verily, if I estimate aright, shortly before the coming of Him, who from the highest Circle bore off from Dis the mighty spoil, on every side the depths of the foul valley quaked so<sup>2</sup>, that methought the universe was affected by love, through which, as some believe, the world hath once and again been reduced to chaos<sup>3</sup>: and at that moment this ancient rock here and elsewhere was thus overthrown. But turn thine eyes downward, for the river of blood<sup>4</sup> is nigh, in the boiling stream whereof are those who sin through violence against their neighbour.'

The  
Centaur.

Alas for that blind covetousness, at once guilty and vain, which stimulates us so in our brief life, and anon in the eternal life thus painfully macerates us! I beheld a wide moat bent into an arc, corresponding to that which according to my Guide's account encloses the whole level; and between it and the foot of the bank Centaurs<sup>5</sup> armed with arrows were running on the trail, as in the world they were wont to go

<sup>1</sup> On the occasion mentioned in *Inf.* ix. 22.

<sup>2</sup> The reference is to the earthquake at the time of the Crucifixion, which took place shortly before the Descent into Hell.

<sup>3</sup> This is the doctrine of Empedocles, that periodically the universe was organized and disorganized by hate and love.

Phlegethon.

<sup>5</sup> The Centaurs, like the Minotaur, being half beast, represent brute violence.

a-hunting. Seeing us descend, they halted one and all, and from the band three of them came forth, with bows and shafts which they had previously selected; and one shouted from afar: 'To what torment do ye come, ye that descend the hillside? Tell me from thence, or I draw my bow.' My Master said: 'Our answer shall be made to Chiron when we reach you there; that hasty spirit of thine was ever thy bane.' Then, touching my side, he said: 'That is Nessus, who died for the fair Deianeira, and himself exacted vengeance for himself'; and the middle one, whose eyes are fixed on his breast, is the mighty Chiron, who reared Achilles; the third is Pholus, who was so furious. They circulate round the fosse by thousands, piercing with their arrows whatever spirit emerges from the blood beyond the limit appointed for its sin.'

We approached those agile beasts; and Chiron, taking an Chiron. arrow, with the notch end drew back his beard behind his cheeks. When he had uncovered his great mouth, he said to his companions: 'Are ye ware that the hinder one moves what he touches? It is not thus with the feet of the dead?' And my kind Leader, who was now over against his breast, where the two natures join, replied: 'Full sure he is alive, and 'tis mine office thus without escort to show him the dark valley: necessity it is, not pleasure, that brings him hither. So mighty a spirit, ceasing from the Halleluia song, entrusted to me this unwonted function: he is no robber, and no fraudulent soul am I. But I pray thee by that Power, in

<sup>1</sup> Nessus attempted to carry off Deianeira, the wife of Hercules, and was shot by him with a poisoned arrow. Before dying, he gave her a garment imbrued with his own blood, telling her that it was a charm by which to retain her husband's love. When Deianeira subsequently used it for that purpose, the poison from the arrow which had mixed with the blood caused Hercules' death.

the strength of which I pursue my way along so wild a road, grant us one of thy band to accompany us, that he may point out to us the ford, and carry this man on his back, for he is no spirit that can traverse the air.' Chiron turned him toward his right side, and said to Nessus: 'Return, and guide them as he asks, and if thou meetest another band bid them withdraw.'

Phlegethon;  
the violent  
against their  
neighbour.

Now did we proceed with our trusty escort along the bank of the boiling crimson flood, where those within it raised piercing cries. Some folk I saw immersed even to their brows; and the mighty Centaur said: 'Those are tyrants, whose hands were imbrued in bloodshed and plunder. There they shed tears for their merciless outrages; there is Alexander, and Dionysius the cruel, who afflicted Sicily with years of suffering; and that forehead with hair so black is Azzolino<sup>1</sup>, and the other, the fair one, is Opizzo da Este<sup>2</sup>, who, as the story truly tells, was murdered by his stepson in the world above.' Thereupon I turned me to the Poet; and he said: 'Regard him now as thy prime authority, and me as secondary.' A short space beyond the Centaur halted over against folk who were seen to emerge as far as the throat from that boiling stream. He pointed out to us a shade on one side apart, and said: 'This is he who in God's very bosom pierced the heart which on the Thames is still in honour<sup>3</sup>.' Anon I beheld people, whose heads

<sup>1</sup> Ezzelino da Romano (1194-1259), lord of the March of Treviso, a bloodthirsty tyrant.

<sup>2</sup> Obizzo, marquis of Ferrara (1264-93), who was said to have been murdered by his son and successor Azzo. The term 'stepson' as applied to Azzo is perhaps intended to suggest the unfaithfulness of his mother.

<sup>3</sup> Guy de Montfort, son of Simon de Montfort, in 1270 slew Henry, son of Richard, Earl of Cornwall, in the church of San Silvestro in



together with the whole of their chests stood out from the stream; and of them I recognized not a few. Thus by degrees that blood reached so low a level that it did but scald the feet; and there it was that we crossed the dike. 'Even as on this side thou seest the boiling flood grow ever shallower,' said the Centaur, 'I would have thee understand that in the opposite direction its bed sinks more and more, until it reaches the part where tyranny is doomed to pain. On that side doth the divine justice torment Attila, who was a scourge on earth, and Pyrrhus<sup>1</sup> and Sextus; and it causes the tears to flow for evermore, which by its boiling heat it extorts from Rinier da Corneto and Rinier Pazzo<sup>2</sup>, who molested so the highways.' Then he turned back, and once more passed the ford.

### CANTO XIII. THE SEVENTH CIRCLE; SECOND RING

Not yet had Nessus arrived at the further bank, when we entered a wood unmarked by any track. Its leaves were not green, but dusky in hue; its branches were not smooth, but gnarled and twisted; no fruit was there, but poisonous thorns. Not so rough and tangled are the thickets inhabited by those wild beasts, which between Cecina and Corneto shun the cultivated lands<sup>3</sup>. There the hideous Harpies make their Viterbo during the celebration of mass. The story that Henry's heart was preserved in a pillar on a bridge over the Thames, which is here referred to, is almost certainly fabulous.

<sup>1</sup> Pyrrhus is placed here because he ravaged Italy, and Sextus Pompeius on account of his piratical campaigns.

<sup>2</sup> These two were notorious highwaymen.

<sup>3</sup> The river Cecina and the town of Corneto mark the northern and southern extremities of the Tuscan Maremma.

necks, who by their gloomy prediction of coming disaster drove away the Trojans from the Strophades<sup>1</sup>. Wide wings they have, and the necks and faces of men, talons on their feet, and feathers on their huge bellies; they utter lamentations upon the weird trees. And the kind Master spake to me, and thus began: 'Before thou enterest further, know that thou art in the second ring<sup>2</sup>, and wilt be there till thou reachest the dread sand. Wherefore give good heed, and so wilt thou see things which would discredit tale of mine.'

The wood  
of the  
suicides.

I was ware that on every side lamentations were being uttered, yet saw I no one from whom they could proceed; wherefore I halted all distraught. Methinks he fancied that I supposed all these sounds to come forth between those stems from folk who on our account concealed themselves. Wherefore the Master said: 'Do but tear off a twig from one of these trees, and the thoughts of thy mind will prove altogether at fault.' Then I reached forth my hand a little, and from a large thorn-bush plucked a spray; whereupon its trunk exclaimed: 'Wherefore rendest thou me?' Anon, when it had become discoloured with blood, it cried out afresh: 'Wherefore tearest thou me? Hast thou no particle of compassionate feeling? Men we were, and now are we changed to bushes: had we been the spirits of serpents, surely thy hand should be more tender.' As happens when a green stick, which is ignited at one end, at the other drips, and hisses by reason of wind which escapes, so from

<sup>1</sup> The story is told in Virg. *Aen.* iii. 209 foll.

<sup>2</sup> This ring contains the souls of the violent against themselves and their possessions—i. e. the suicides and the spendthrifts. The scene and the surroundings here are emblematical of the hopelessness and despair which characterize suicide, and the partial loss of individuality involved in the vegetable growth with which the spirits are identified corresponds to the nature of their sin.

the rent fragment there issued forth together words and blood; whereat I let fall its tip, and remained like one afeard. 'Had it been possible for him, injured spirit,' my Sage replied, 'to realize beforehand what he hath imagined only by means of my verses<sup>1</sup>, he would not have put forth his hand against thee; but it was the incredibility of the thing that caused me to incite him to a deed which weighs on my conscience. But tell him who thou wast, so that by way of a slight compensation he may refresh the memory of thee in the upper world, whither he is permitted to return.'

And the trunk: 'Thy sweet words allure me so, that I cannot hold my peace; and let it not weary you, if I be tempted to discourse awhile. I am the man who held both the keys of Frederic's heart<sup>2</sup>, and in locking and unlocking turned them so gently, that I removed wellnigh every one from his confidence: with such fidelity I discharged the glorious office, that I lost thereby my slumbers and pined my blood. The harlot<sup>3</sup> who never turned away from Caesar's household her shameless eyes, that worldwide bane, and peculiar vice of courts, inflamed against me all men's minds; and these inflamed spirits so inflamed Augustus<sup>4</sup>, that my glad honours were exchanged for sad grief. Prompted by disdainful feeling, my mind, which thought by death to escape men's disdain, caused me, just though I was, to be to myself unjust. By the newly struck roots of this tree I swear to you, that I never broke my faith with my lord, who was so

Pier delle Vigne.

<sup>1</sup> The story of Polydorus in Virg. *Aen.* iii. 22 foll., which Dante has imitated here.

<sup>2</sup> This is Pier delle Vigne, the secretary and confidant of Frederic II, who was ultimately disgraced on a charge of treachery and blinded, and died in 1249. Villani doubts whether he committed suicide. The 'keys' here spoken of are those of good-will and ill-will.

<sup>3</sup> Envy.

<sup>4</sup> The Emperor Frederic.

worthy of honour. And if either of you returns to the world, let him reinstate my memory, which is still abased through the blow that envy dealt to it.' He paused awhile, and then, 'While he is silent,' said the Poet to me, 'miss not thine opportunity; but speak, and inquire of him what more thou desirest.' And I replied: 'Do thou question him again of what thou thinkest would give me satisfaction; myself I could not, my heart is so full of pity.' Thereupon he began once more: 'So may the man fulfil for thee without stint, imprisoned spirit, the wishes thou dost express—I pray thee proceed, and tell us how the soul is linked with these gnarled trunks; and further, if thou canst, whether any doth ever free himself from limbs so strange.' Then did the trunk pant heavily, and anon that breath took form in the following words: 'Briefly will I reply to you. When in passionate mood the spirit quits the body, from which by its own act it hath rent itself, Minos dispatches it to the seventh gulf. It falls into the wood, nor is a special place assigned to it, but wheresoever chance doth hurl it, it germinates like a grain of spelt; so it shoots up and forms a woodland tree: the Harpies, which thereafter feed on its leaves, create pain, and an outlet for that pain<sup>1</sup>. Like the other souls, we shall come to claim our robes of flesh; yet shall not any be clothed again therewith, for what a man robs himself of he may not rightfully possess. Hither shall we drag them, and throughout the doleful wood our bodies shall be suspended, each from the thorn-bush of its injurious shade.'

The spend-  
thrifts.

We were still attentive to the trunk, thinking that he had yet more to say to us, when we were surprised by a din, like one who is ware of the boar and the hunters approaching his station, when he hears the hounds crashing through the

<sup>1</sup> The rent made by the Harpies became an outlet for the cries of pain.



brakes. And lo! on the left hand two spirits<sup>1</sup>, naked and torn, were seen in such wild flight, that they broke through all the tangled branches of the wood. The one in front cried: 'Now haste thee, haste thee to mine aid, O death.' And the other, who thought his own pace too slow, said: 'Lano, at the jousts of Toppo thy legs were not so alert as this<sup>2</sup>.' And haply because his breath failed him, he flung himself into a bush to form one heap therewith. The wood in their rear was filled with black dogs, eager and at full speed, like greyhounds that have slipped the leash. In him who threw himself down they fixed their teeth, and tore him piecemeal; anon they bore away those piteous limbs. Then did my Guide take me by the hand and lead me to the bush, which by reason of its bleeding gashes was uttering vain laments. 'O Jacomo da sant' Andrea<sup>3</sup>,' it said, 'what hath it profited thee to use me as thy shelter? Wherein am I responsible for thy guilty life?' My Master, when he stayed his steps hard by him, said: 'Who wast thou, who through so many wounds dost emit mournful speech and blood withal?' And he to us: 'Ye spirits that have arrived to see the shameful deed of violence that hath thus stripped my leaves from off me, gather them together at the foot of my sad bush. I was a citizen of that city, which exchanged for the Baptist its first patron deity<sup>4</sup>; and he for this cause

<sup>1</sup> These are souls of spendthrifts.

<sup>2</sup> Lano da Siena, a youthful spendthrift, was said, when his fortunes were desperate, to have exposed himself to certain death instead of running away at the battle of Pieve del Toppo.

<sup>3</sup> He was a spendthrift of Padua.

<sup>4</sup> Mars, to whom, according to the story then current, a temple was erected in Florence in the time of Augustus; but this was converted into a church of St. John the Baptist, i.e. the old Cathedral of Florence, which is now the Baptistery.

will ever distress her by his art : and were it not that on the crossing of the Arno <sup>1</sup> there are still some visible remains of him, those citizens, who thereafter rebuilt the city on the ashes left by Attila <sup>2</sup>, would have caused the work to be done in vain. Of mine own house I made for myself a gibbet <sup>3</sup>.'

## CANTO XIV. THE SEVENTH CIRCLE; THIRD RING

The third  
ring; falling  
flakes of fire.

Constrained by affection for my birthplace I collected the scattered leaves, and restored them to the spirit, who was by this time faint. Thereafter we arrived at the limit which separates the second ring from the third <sup>4</sup>, where a terrible device of justice meets the view. In order to set forth clearly things so strange, be it said that we reached a waste, from the surface whereof every green growth is banished. It is girdled all round by the doleful wood <sup>5</sup>, as that is by the painful fosse <sup>6</sup>; there on the extreme verge we checked our footsteps. The ground was formed of a dense dry sand, resembling that which in days of yore was trodden by Cato's

<sup>1</sup> i.e. on the Ponte Vecchio, where the statue of Mars was afterwards set up. Dante in the present passage introduces the superstitious feelings concerning the site which existed in his time.

<sup>2</sup> Dante has here confused Attila, who never came near Florence, with Totila, king of the Ostrogoths, who besieged that city, and according to the common tradition destroyed it, though in reality he did not do so.

<sup>3</sup> i.e. 'I hung myself at home.'

<sup>4</sup> The third ring contains the souls of the violent against God; and this form of sin is of three kinds, according as it is directed (1) against God Himself, when it is blasphemy; (2) against nature, when it is Sodomy; (3) against the gifts of nature, when it is usury.

<sup>5</sup> The wood of the suicides.

<sup>6</sup> Phlegethon.

feet<sup>1</sup>. Vengeance of God, what fear of thee should be felt by every one who reads what was displayed before mine eyes! Many companies of naked spirits I beheld, who, one and all, were uttering sad, sad laments; and they seemed to be subject to different ordinances. Some folk were lying face upwards on the earth; some were sitting all hunched up, while others were walking unceasingly. Those that paced around were the most numerous, and those the least so who lay exposed to their torment, but the tongues of these were more prompt to utter cries of pain. All over the sandy waste broad fiery flakes were raining slowly down, like a snowfall in the mountains in windless calm. As in India, that hot clime, Alexander saw flames falling over his host unquenched to earth<sup>2</sup>—wherefore he bethought him to set his troops to trample the ground, seeing that before it spread the fire was more easily extinguished—in such wise descended that everlasting burning: and through it the sand caught fire, like tinder under the influence of the steel, to increase their pain twofold. All unresting was the play of the suffering hands, as, now on this side, now on that, they fended off from them the ever renewed flames.

I thus began: 'Master, thou who dost overcome all things save the stubborn demons, who at the entrance of the gate came forth against us, who is that huge being<sup>3</sup>, who looks as

The violent  
against  
God;  
Capaneus.

<sup>1</sup> The reference here is to Lucan's description of the barren soil in the neighbourhood of the Syrtis, over which Cato led the remains of Pompey's army to Juba; *Phars.* ix. 431-7.

<sup>2</sup> The story in the form here given was borrowed by Dante from Albertus Magnus *De Meteoris*, i. 4, 8; the primary source of it was the apocryphal letter of Alexander to Aristotle.

<sup>3</sup> Capaneus, one of the Seven against Thebes, who when mounting the walls of that city defied Jupiter, and was smitten with a thunderbolt by him.

if he heeded not the conflagration, and lies scowling so contemptuously that the fire-shower seems not to tame him?' And the spirit himself, who perceived that I was questioning my Leader concerning him, exclaimed: 'As I was in life, such am I when dead. Should Jove tire out his smith, from whose hands, when incensed, he took the pointed thunderbolt whereby on my last day I was smitten; or should he tire in turn the other smiths at the black forge beneath Etna, crying: "Help, good Vulcan, help," as he did on the field of Phlegra<sup>1</sup>, and shoot at me with all his force, he would not be able to rejoice in his vengeance.' Then did my Leader speak out with a force, the like of which I had not heard from him: 'O Capaneus, in that thy pride is not extinguished thy punishment is increased; no torment save thy madness would be suffering adequate to match thy fury.' Anon he turned him to me with calmer aspect, saying: 'This was one of the seven kings who laid siege to Thebes; and he held and, methinks, still holds God in contempt and esteems him little; but, even as I told him, his disdain is for his breast an amply meet garniture. Now follow me, and beware thou set not thy feet hereafter on the burning sand, but keep them ever close to the wood.'

Phlegethon;  
the origin of  
the infernal  
rivers.

In silence we reached the spot where there gushes forth from the forest a tiny stream, the ruddy hue whereof still sets my hair on end. As from the Bulicame<sup>2</sup> there issues a rivulet, which thereafter the sinful women share between them,

<sup>1</sup> It was on the Phlegræan plains that the Giants were defeated by Jupiter, when they attempted to scale Olympus.

<sup>2</sup> A hot mineral spring near Viterbo, the water from which is carried off in several channels. In Dante's time the prostitutes who lived in its neighbourhood were forbidden to use the baths to which the other women resorted, and had the water from the stream conducted to their houses.



so through the sand did that brook descend. Its bed and both its banks had been turned to stone, and its edges at the sides; from this I recognized that thereby lay our way. 'Among all the other things that I have pointed out to thee, since we entered by the gate the threshold whereof is denied to none, no object whereon thine eyes have rested hath been so noteworthy as the present stream, which extinguishes all flamelets above it.' These were the words my Leader uttered; wherefore I besought him to impart to me the food, for which he had awakened the craving in me. Then said he: <sup>1</sup>In mid sea there lies a ruined land called Crete, beneath whose king <sup>2</sup>the world of yore was innocent. There is a mountain there, which bore the name of Ida, gladdened once by springs and foliage, now deserted like a thing outworn <sup>3</sup>. Rhea once chose it as a safe birthplace for her son, and there, to conceal him better when he cried, she caused the clashing arms to sound <sup>4</sup>. Within the mountain a great Old Man <sup>5</sup> stands erect, who keeps his back turned toward Damietta, and looks toward Rome as if it were his mirror <sup>5</sup>. Of fine gold his head is made, and his arms and

<sup>1</sup> Saturn, in the age of gold.

<sup>2</sup> This was the result of the Venetian domination in that island.

<sup>3</sup> As Saturn had eaten her former children by him, Rhea on the birth of Jupiter concealed his infant cries from his father by the clashing of metal.

<sup>4</sup> This figure was suggested by the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Dan. ii. 32. As applied by Dante, it typifies the history of the human race in its successive stages, as it passed through the golden, the silver, the iron age, &c.

<sup>5</sup> The city of Damietta in Egypt was well known to Dante's contemporaries, because it had been twice captured by the Crusaders. Here it is taken to represent the East generally; and the meaning of the passage is, that the human race now disregards the great ancient monarchies which existed in that quarter, and looks towards Rome as the seat of the imperial authority.

breast are pure silver; then as far as the forked part he is of copper: from that point downward he is wholly of choice iron, save that the right foot is of baked clay, and on that rather than the other he stands upright<sup>1</sup>. Every part except the gold is rifted by a fissure which drips tears; and these, when combined, force a passage through that cavern<sup>2</sup>. Their course falls in cascades into this vale, where they form Acheron, Styx, and Phlegethon; then it passes downward through this narrow channel as far as the point where there is no further descent: there they form Cocytus; and the nature of that pond thou wilt see for thyself, wherefore here I give no account thereof.' And I to him: 'If the streamlet before us hath thus its source in our world, wherefore at this edge of the wood do we see it first?' And he to me: 'The place, thou knowest, is round, and albeit thou hast journeyed so far, keeping ever to the left<sup>3</sup>, in descending to the depths, thou hast not yet compassed the entire circle; wherefore, if a fresh object meets our view, this should not call up a look of wonder on thy face.' And I once more: 'Master, where are Phlegethon and Lethe? for the one of them thou dost not name, and of the other thou sayest that it is formed by this fall of tears.' 'In all thy questions assuredly thou pleasest me,' he replied, 'but one of those thou askest the boiling of the ruddy water should have fully answered<sup>4</sup>. Lethe thou

<sup>1</sup> At the forked part the dual power of the Church and the Empire commences; the former of these, which is the right foot, is the more fragile in its texture, but has been the stronger support to the human race.

<sup>2</sup> The fissure is the corruption of the world since the Fall, which causes men's tears to flow; and these are the source of the infernal rivers.

<sup>3</sup> It may here be remarked, that the leftward course of the Poets signifies allegorically, that the forms of sin which present themselves to one descending through Hell proceed from worse to worse.

<sup>4</sup> The reason is that the name Phlegethon is derived from the Greek φλέγειν, 'to burn.'

shalt see, but without this gulf, at the place whither the souls repair to lave them, when their repented sin is done away<sup>1</sup>.’ He added: ‘Now ’tis time to quit the wood; see thou follow me: the edges, as they are not on fire, afford a way, and above them all flames are quenched.’

## CANTO XV. THE SEVENTH CIRCLE; THIRD RING

Now do we follow one of the hard margins, and overhead the stream of the rivulet casts a misty shade, so that it shields from the fire the water and the banks. As is the defence which the Flemings make between Wissant and Bruges<sup>2</sup> to force the sea to retire, through fear of the flood that rushes toward them; or that which the Paduans make along the Brenta for the protection of their towns and castles, ere Carinthia feels the summer heat<sup>3</sup>: in such wise were those banks formed, albeit their designer, whoever he was, made them not so high nor yet so massive. We had already gone so far from the wood, that, however much I had turned me round to look, I could not have traced its position, when we encountered a troop of spirits that was approaching alongside the bank, and each of them gazed at us, as a man looks at his fellow at eventide under the new moon; and they

The violent  
against  
nature.

<sup>1</sup> i. e. in the Earthly Paradise, after they have passed through Purgatory; cp. *Purg.* xxviii. 130.

<sup>2</sup> The town of Wissant lay between Calais and Cape Gris Nez; that place and Bruges formed the western and eastern limits of the Flemish coast in Dante's time.

<sup>3</sup> The Brenta, which flows by Padua, rises in the Carinthian Alps, and when the snows in that region are melted by the summer heat, the river overflows its banks.

puckered their eyelids towards us, even as an aged tailor doth at the needle's eye.

Brunetto  
Latini.

While we were being thus scrutinized by the weird company, I was recognized by one, who caught me by the hem of my garment<sup>1</sup>, and exclaimed: 'How passing strange!' And while he reached out his arm toward me, I fixed mine eyes on his tanned countenance, so that the scorched visage prevented not my mind from recognizing him; and bending my face toward his I replied: 'Are you here, ser Brunetto<sup>2</sup>?' And he: 'Ah! my son, take it not amiss, if Brunetto Latini turns back awhile with thee, and lets his troop pass on.' To him I said: 'With all my heart I beg this of you; and if it be your pleasure that I should sit with you, I will do so, if this one approves, for with him I make my journey.' 'My son,' said he, 'whoso of this band stops but for a moment, doth lie thereafter a hundred years without waving his arms when the fire smites upon him. Move onward then; I will follow at thy skirts, and anon will rejoin my band, which goes its way lamenting its eternal miseries.' I dared not descend from the roadway to walk by his side, but kept my head bent down, like one who walks respectfully.

Predictions  
of Dante's  
coming  
fortunes.

He thus began: 'What fortune or what fate before thy life's end brings thee here below? And who is this that shows thee the way?' 'Above there in the tranquil life,' I answered him, 'I lost my way in a valley, before the tale of my days was fully told. But yesternorn I turned my

<sup>1</sup> He catches the hem of Dante's garment, because the sand, on which he was walking, was on a much lower level than the embankment where Dante was.

<sup>2</sup> Brunetto Latini was a famous Florentine statesman and man of letters, and he encouraged Dante in his studies. The title 'ser' was given to him as being a notary.



back upon it: this one appeared to me as I was returning thither, and is leading me homeward by this path.' And he to me: 'If thou followest thy star, thou canst not fail to reach the glorious port, if I observed aright in the glad world above; and had I not died all too early for that, I should have given thee encouragement to the work, since I saw heaven so propitious to thee. But the ungrateful, malignant common folk, which descended from Fiesole in days of yore <sup>1</sup>, and still savours of the mountain and the rock, for thy good deeds will become thine enemy: and that is right, for it is not meet that the sweet fig should bear fruit amid the acid service-berries. In the world an ancient story calls them blind; a covetous race, envious and proud they are; from their way of life see thou keep thyself clean. Thy fortune hath so great honour in store for thee, that both one and the other party <sup>2</sup> will hunger for thee; but that which they crave shall not come near their lips. Let the beasts of Fiesole rend and tear one another, but let them not lay hands on the plant <sup>3</sup>, if on their dunghill one such still springs up, wherein the holy seed of those Romans revives, who remained there, when it had become the home of so great wickedness.' 'Had my prayer been fully heard,' I replied to him, 'you would not yet be an exile from human life; for there abides imprinted on my mind—though at this moment it pains my heart—your kindly and affectionate paternal look, when in the world ever and anon you taught me how man wins

<sup>1</sup> The commons of Florence, according to the tradition, were originally immigrants from Faesulae (Fiesole), while the nobles were colonists from Rome.

<sup>2</sup> Both the Black and the White Guelfs.

<sup>3</sup> This is an obscure intimation that Dante was descended from one of the old Roman families.

immortality<sup>1</sup>: and the depth of my gratitude all my life long it is fitting that my tongue should declare. That which you tell me of my fortunes I note, and reserve it together with another utterance for the comments of a Lady<sup>2</sup> who will be skilled therein, if I reach her presence. But this much I would openly declare to you, provided that my conscience doth not chide me,—that I am prepared for whatever fortune wills. This agreement is no strange thing to mine ears; wherefore let fortune turn her wheel as pleases her, even as the countryman turns his mattock.’ My Master then turning round by the right looked me in the face, and said: ‘He listens well who pays heed thereto.’

Other  
Sodomites.

Yet none the less for all this do I go my way conversing with ser Brunetto, and I inquire who are the chief and the most famous of his companions. And he to me: ‘Concerning some it is well to be informed; about the rest it will be praiseworthy to hold one’s peace, for the time would be too short for so long a recital. In brief be it known to thee that they all were clergy and distinguished men of letters, and of great renown, who on earth were tainted by one and the same sin. In that awful crowd Priscian<sup>3</sup> goes on his way, and Francesco d’Accorso<sup>4</sup>; and furthermore, hadst thou desired the sight of such-like garbage, thou mightest have beheld there the man, who was transferred by the servant of servants from the Arno to the Bacchiglione<sup>5</sup>, where he left his body exhausted by vice. Of others too I would tell;

<sup>1</sup> i. e. the undying fame which follows on a noble life.

<sup>2</sup> Beatrice.

<sup>3</sup> The grammarian of the sixth century.

<sup>4</sup> Law lecturer in Oxford from 1273 onward.

<sup>5</sup> Andrea de’ Mozzi was translated by Boniface VIII from the bishopric of Florence to that of Vicenza 1295 on account of his unseemly living. ‘Servus servorum Dei’ is one of the titles of the Pope.

but I may no longer walk or converse with thee, for yonder I perceive fresh dust arising from the sandy waste. A folk approaches whose company I may not share; I commend to thee my *Tesoro*<sup>1</sup>, wherein I still live: no more I ask.' Then he turned back; and he looked like one of those, who on the plain at Verona run the race for the green cloth<sup>2</sup>; and of them it was not the loser but the winner whom he resembled.

## CANTO XVI. THE SEVENTH CIRCLE; THIRD RING

Already I had reached a point where the booming of the water was audible which fell into the next Circle<sup>3</sup>, resembling the hum that proceeds from beehives, when three shades in company issued at full speed from a band, which was passing by beneath the agonising shower that tortured them. They came towards us, and one and all shouted: 'Halt, thou who seemest to us by thy dress to be an inhabitant of our sinful city.' Ah me! What wounds I saw, both fresh and old, burnt by the flames on their limbs! At the mere remembrance of them I am still distressed. My Teacher gave heed to their cries, and turning his face toward me said: 'Now wait: these are persons to whom courtesy is due. And were it not for the fire which the nature of the place shoots forth, I should say that it were more seemly for thee than for them to hurry.' So soon as we halted they began afresh

Other distinguished  
Florentines.

<sup>1</sup> His encyclopaedic work, the *Livre dou Tresor*, which was written in French.

<sup>2</sup> An annual foot-race, for which the prize was a piece of green cloth. The competitors in it ran naked.

<sup>3</sup> The water which falls here is that of Phlegethon; the descent into the eighth Circle, or Malebolge, is precipitous.

their old refrain; and when they reached us, they all three formed a ring. As the champions are wont to move, when, naked and greased, they watch for their opportunity of gripping, ere they engage in the strife of blows; in such wise, working round, each of them directed his looks toward me, so that the neck was ever following a contrary direction to the feet<sup>1</sup>.

They accost  
Dante.

'And if we and our prayers,' began one of them, 'are rendered contemptible by the misery of this unstable region, and by our dark and hairless faces, yet let our reputation incline thy mind to tell us who thou art, that thus unscathed dost plod thy way alive through Hell. This one, whose footsteps thou seest me follow, for all that he goes naked and bald, was of higher rank than thou supposest. Grandson he was of the good Gualdrada, Guido Guerra by name<sup>2</sup>, and in his lifetime he accomplished much by counsel and by arms. The other, who treads the sand behind me, is Tegghiaio Aldobrandi, whose fame ought to be acceptable in the world above<sup>3</sup>. And I, who am tormented along with them, was Jacopo Rusticucci; and verily my passionate wife is the chief cause of my bane<sup>4</sup>.' Had I been sheltered from the fire, I should have flung myself down into their midst, and methinks my Teacher would have permitted it. But seeing that I should have scorched and burnt myself, fear overcame my good will, which made me eager to embrace them. Anon I began: 'Twas not contempt, but

<sup>1</sup> As they moved round, they were continually turning their heads backwards or sideways, in order to get a full view of Dante.

<sup>2</sup> A distinguished Guelf leader at Florence.

<sup>3</sup> Because he tried to dissuade the Florentines from marching against Siena before the disastrous battle of Montaperti.

<sup>4</sup> Her temper was the chief cause of the sin which brought him here.



grief, that your sad plight imprinted on my heart—and that so deeply, that it will be long ere it is wholly obliterated—so soon as this my Lord spake to me words, through which I realized that persons such as you were approaching. To your city I belong; and I have ever affectionately recounted and heard others recount your deeds and your honoured names. I am leaving behind me the gall, and go in quest of the sweet fruits promised to me by my truthful Guide; but first I must descend the steep way to the centre.'

'So may thy spirit long direct thy limbs,' replied he in turn, 'and after thy death may thy fame shine brightly—tell us, do courtesy and courage abide in our city as of yore, or have they wholly deserted it? For Guglielmo Borsiere, who hath recently come to share our pains, and is passing yonder with his company, vexes us much by his report.' 'Florence, the newly imported folk<sup>1</sup> and the sudden growth of riches have generated in thee pride and extravagance, so that already thou sufferest therefrom.' Thus with uplifted countenance I exclaimed: and the three, when they heard that as mine answer, looked one at the other, as men look on hearing the truth. 'If on other occasions,' they all replied, 'it costs thee so little to satisfy others, happy art thou, if thou speakest thus as liketh thee. Wherefore, if thou dost escape from these dark regions, and returnest to see once more the fair stars, when thou enjoyest narrating thy past experiences, see that thou tell the folk of us.' Then they broke up their ring, and their swift feet seemed as wings for their flight. One could not have uttered an Amen before they were out of sight; wherefore the Master thought good to depart.

They  
inquire  
concerning  
Florence.

<sup>1</sup> The immigrants from the country districts, who had settled in Florence and become traders.

The  
waterfall.

I followed him, and we had not proceeded far, when the sound of the water was so near to us, that however loud we might speak we should hardly have been heard. As that river—the first that from Monte Viso eastwards on the left flank of the Apennines hath an independent course<sup>1</sup>—which is called Acquacheta above, ere it precipitates itself down to its low-lying bed, and at Forlì loses that name<sup>2</sup>, booms over St. Benedict of the upland<sup>3</sup>, as it descends towards a declivity, where there was to have been a settlement for a thousand<sup>4</sup>; so did we hear that dark water resound as it fell from a precipitous brink, so loudly that it would speedily have stunned our ears.

Virgil  
summons  
Geryon.

I was girt round my waist by a cord, wherewith erewhile I purposed to master the panther with the spotted skin<sup>5</sup>; and this, when in accordance with my Leader's injunctions I had wholly loosed it from me, I twisted into a knot and handed to him: whereupon he turned him toward the right side, and flung it down at some distance from the edge into that deep abyss. 'Now assuredly,' I said to myself, 'something strange must respond to the unwonted signal, which my Master is thus following with his eye.' Ah! how

<sup>1</sup> The river is the Montone, which flows into the Adriatic. All the other streams which in Dante's time flowed from the northern side of the Apennines in this part were tributaries of the Po, which river rises in Monte Viso.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. changes it for that of Montone.

<sup>3</sup> This was the name of the monastery in the neighbourhood of the waterfall.

<sup>4</sup> The Conti Guidi, to whom the neighbouring lands belonged, had proposed to settle the inhabitants of that district there, but this scheme fell through.

<sup>5</sup> The panther here, as in *Inf.* i. 42, signifies lust, and the cord by which Dante had proposed to master it signifies the restrictions of the ascetic life.

careful men should be in the presence of those who not merely behold what is done, but by their intelligence penetrate the thoughts! He said to me: 'The object which I expect will quickly arise, and that which thy thoughts are vainly fancying is soon to be revealed to thine eyes.' A man should ever refuse utterance, so long as he may, to a truth which bears the semblance of falsehood, seeing that it brings upon him unmerited discredit; but here I cannot hold my peace: and by the verses of this Comedy. Reader, I swear to thee—so may they not be doomed to short-lived favour—that I saw a figure amazing to the most steadfast heart approach, swimming up through that thick and murky air; even as the diver returns who descends at times to loose an anchor grappled by a rock or other object concealed in the sea, who stretches himself upward and draws in his feet.

## CANTO XVII. THE SEVENTH CIRCLE; THIRD RING

'Behold the monster with the pointed tail, who crosses mountains, and breaks through walls and defence of arms; lo! this is he who fills the whole world with stench.' Thus did my Leader begin to address me, and he beckoned to him that he should come to land hard by the margin of the causeway we had traversed: and that foul symbol of fraud came on, and brought up to the bank his head and breast, but his tail he drew not to shore. His face was that of a righteous man, so benevolent was its exterior semblance; but the rest of his figure wore a serpent's shape. Two taloned

Geryon  
described.

arms he had, hairy up to the armpits; and on his back and breast and both his sides knots and small bucklers were painted <sup>1</sup>. With more colours, whether as groundwork or pattern, never did Tartars or Turks make a cloth <sup>2</sup>, nor were webs so rich placed by Arachne <sup>3</sup> on the loom. As ever and anon punts are drawn up on a river-bank, so that they are partly in the water and partly on land; and as in the country where the gluttonous Germans dwell the beaver prepares him for his campaign <sup>4</sup>; so did the accursed monster post himself on the stony border which encloses the sand. The whole length of his tail he swunged in the void, wreathing on high the venomous fork, wherewith, like a scorpion's, the point was armed.

The usurers. My Leader said: 'Now must we somewhat change our course to reach that malignant beast which is couching there'; so we descended toward the right side, and proceeded for ten paces along the verge, to keep quite clear of the sand and fiery shower. And when we had reached him, a short space beyond I beheld folk seated on the sand nigh where the ground falls away. Thereupon the Master said to me: 'In order that thou mayst bear away with thee complete acquaintance with this ring, hie thee, and regard their condition.

<sup>1</sup> The symbolism of Geryon's appearance is, that the face signifies hypocrisy, the serpent figure deceit and malice, the talons rapacity, the knots and shields which appear on his body snares and subterfuges.

<sup>2</sup> The 'Tartary cloths' were well known in Europe during the middle ages.

<sup>3</sup> The typical weaver or embroiderer. She challenged Minerva to a contest in that art, and was changed by her into a spider.

<sup>4</sup> The beaver's supposed campaign is against the fishes. From the habit which that animal has of sitting on a river bank with its tail in the water, there arose a fable that he used his tail for fishing purposes, attracting the fish by the oil which dropped from it.



Let thy communications there be brief; till thy return I will parley with this one, that he may vouchsafe us the use of his strong shoulders.' So did I once more take my solitary way over that seventh Circle's outermost ridge, where the melancholy folk <sup>1</sup> were seated. Through their eyes their anguish was gushing forth: on this side and on that they defended themselves with their hands, now from the flames, now from the burning soil; even as dogs do in summer, at one time with their muzzles, at another with their feet, when bitten by fleas or gnats or flies. After gazing at the faces of one and another of these on whom the painful fire falls, I recognized none of them; but I became aware that from the neck of each there hung a money-bag of distinctive colour and pattern, and on this it seems they feast their eyes. And when I came into their midst and looked around <sup>2</sup>, on a yellow purse I saw a blue patch with a lion's face and bearing. Next, as my looks pursued their onward course, I beheld another purse red as blood, exhibiting a goose whiter than butter. And one spirit, whose white pouch had for its device a pregnant sow in blue, said to me: 'What doest thou in this gulf? Now go thy way; and since thou art still alive, be it known to thee that my neighbour Vitaliano will sit here on my left-hand side. In the company of these Florentines am I a Paduan; often and often do they din mine ears with their cry: "May the prince of usurers come <sup>3</sup>, who will bring the bag with three kites' beaks".' Thereat he made a wry mouth, and put out his tongue, like an ox

<sup>1</sup> The usurers. The nature of their sin has been treated of in Canto xi, *ad finem*.

<sup>2</sup> The persons here intended were men of noble families, who were usurers; the devices on the bags are the arms of their families.

Giovanni Buiaconti.

that licks his nose. For my part, fearing lest by tarrying longer I should move his ire who had bidden me make but a short stay, I returned back from those weary souls.

The Poets  
mount on  
Geryon's  
back.

I found my Leader already mounted on the fierce creature's flanks; and he said to me: 'Now be thou strong and courageous. Such as this are the stairways by which we henceforth descend<sup>1</sup>; mount in front of me, for I desire to have the middle place, that the tail may have no power for harm.' Even as one who hath the shivering fit of the ague so near that his nails are already blue, and he trembles all over at the mere sight of shade, such became I when those words were uttered: but his dread commands inspired me with shame, which in the presence of a good master makes the servant strong. On those huge shoulders I took my seat; 'Be sure'—I wished to say, but the voice came not as I intended—'be sure thou embrace me.' But he, who on other occasions succoured me in meeting other hazards, so soon as I had mounted, clasped me in his arms and supported me; and he said: 'Now, Geryon, move thee: let thy circles be wide, and gentle the descent: consider the unwonted burden that thou bearest.'

The descent  
into the  
eighth  
Circle, or  
Malebolge.

As with gradual backward movement a bark quits its station, so from that spot did he withdraw; and so soon as he felt himself wholly at liberty, where his breast was before he turned round his tail, and stretching it out moved it like an eel, and with his arms drew in the air toward him. Not greater, I ween, was Phaëthon's panic, when he let fall the reins, whereby, as may still be seen, the heaven was

<sup>1</sup> When the Poets descend from the eighth into the ninth Circle, they are deposited by the giant Antæus (*Inf.* xxxi. 130 foll.); and they pass the centre of the earth by clinging on to the body of Lucifer (*Inf.* xxxiv. 82).

scorched<sup>1</sup>; nor that of the ill-fated Icarus, when through the melting of the wax he felt the wings being detached from his loins, while his father cried to him: 'Thou goest astray'<sup>2</sup>; than was mine, when I found myself in mid air, and was ware that no object save the monster was in view. Swimming with gentlest motion he pursues his way, wheeling round and downward; but of this I am unconscious, save that the wind comes in my face and from below. Already on the right hand I heard the abyss making beneath us a fearful booming sound, wherefore I reached out my head and gazed downward. Thereupon I was still more terrified at the precipice, for I beheld fires, and heard lamentations, so that I crouched my limbs together trembling. And after that I realized—for before I had not—our downward circling course, by reason of the dire torments which from various quarters were drawing nigh to us. As the falcon that hath been long on the wing, which without catching sight of its lure or its prey makes the falconer exclaim: 'Ah me! thou art descending,' comes wearily down in a hundred circles to the place whence it started briskly, and settles at a distance from its master in fell and wrathful mood; so at the bottom did Geryon deposit us, at the very foot of the precipitous rock; and when he had disburdened him of our persons, he darted off like an arrow from the string.

<sup>1</sup> When Phaëthon obtained permission from Apollo to drive the chariot of the sun, he approached too near the heavens, which were thereby scorched. This, according to the fable, was the origin of the Milky Way.

<sup>2</sup> Icarus, when flying through the air in company with his father Daedalus, approached too near the sun, which melted the waxen fastenings of his wings.

## CANTO XVIII

THE EIGHTH CIRCLE, OR MALEBOLGE;  
FIRST AND SECOND *BOLGE*

Description  
of Male-  
bolge.

In Hell there is a place called Malebolge<sup>1</sup>, formed all of stone, and of iron hue, like the encircling rock which doth encompass it. In the very middle of the accursed area there yawns a pit exceeding wide and deep, the structure whereof in its proper place I will declare. Thus the enclosure that remains is circular, lying between the pit and the foot of the rude beetling precipice, and into ten valleys its basement is partitioned. As is the ground plan of the spot, where to defend a castle's walls successive moats surround it, such in this case is the aspect which those dikes presented: and even as for such fortresses from the thresholds of the gates to the outermost bank small bridges run, so from the base of the cliff rock-ridges started, which intersected the embankments and the ravines, until they reached the pit, where they end and meet. This was the place wherein we found ourselves, when we descended from Geryon's back; and the Poet advanced leftward, while I followed in his footsteps.

The first  
*bolgia*, of

On the right hand I beheld a strange form of woe, strange torments and strange wielders of the lash, wherewith the first

<sup>1</sup> 'Evil-pits.' This is the eighth Circle, which contains those classes of the fraudulent who have violated no special tie or bond. These are ten in number, and corresponding to them there are ten *bolge*, or deep trench-like valleys, into which the whole area is divided. They lie one within the other in concentric circles, separated by walls of rock, and the passage across them is made by means of bridges. The basement of the entire area of Malebolge slopes gradually towards the centre, where is the ninth Circle, which is the Pit of Hell.



trench was filled. At the bottom were the sinners, all naked; the panders  
in the nearer half they came on facing us, in the further they and  
followed the same direction with us, though with hastier steps. seducers.  
Like to this was the plan which in the year of Jubilee<sup>1</sup> by  
reason of the host of worshippers the Romans devised to let  
the folk cross the bridge; so that on the one hand all looked  
toward the Castle, making for St. Peter's, on the other they  
moved toward the Hill<sup>2</sup>. On either side I saw horned  
devils with huge scourges traversing the dark rock, who  
smote them cruelly behind: ah! how at the first lashes they  
made them lift their shanks! none thereafter awaited the  
second or the third.

As I was passing on, mine eyes fell on a certain spirit; Venedico  
whereupon at once I said: 'This one I have not failed ere- Cacciani-  
while to see.' Wherefore I stayed my steps to scrutinize his mico.  
looks; and my kind Leader stopped withal, and consented  
that I should return back a little space. And that sufferer  
from the scourge fancied that he could hide him by bending  
down his face, but little did it avail him; for I said: 'O thou  
who castest down thine eye to earth, if the features that thou  
wearest are not deceptive, thou art Venedico Caccianimico<sup>3</sup>;  
but what hath brought thee to such pungent brine<sup>4</sup>?' And he

<sup>1</sup> The great Jubilee of the year 1300.

<sup>2</sup> The Castle is the Castle of St. Angelo, which is on the same side of  
the Tiber as St. Peter's; and the bridge is the Ponte Sant' Angelo in the  
neighbourhood of the Castle. The Hill is the Capitoline Hill, which is  
the most important point to attract passengers in that direction, as  
St. Peter's is in the other. On the occasion here mentioned the rule of  
right and left in crossing the bridge was established.

<sup>3</sup> He was head of the Guelf party in Bologna in the latter half of the  
thirteenth century.

<sup>4</sup> This means 'acute pain'; but there is a further reference to a  
valley called Salse near Bologna, where the bodies of criminals were  
thrown.

to me: 'Much against my will I tell thee; but the accuracy of thine address compels me, by recalling to my mind the former world. I was the man who induced Ghisolabella<sup>1</sup> to do the will of the Marquis, in whatever form the scandalous story may be told. Nor am I the only native of Bologna that suffers here; nay, so full of them is this place, that not so many tongues are at this moment taught to say *sipa* between the Savena and the Reno<sup>2</sup>; and if thou desirest corroboration or evidence of this, bethink thee of the avarice of our hearts.' While thus he spake a devil smote him with his lash, and said: 'Away, thou pander, here are no women for hire.'

Jason.

Then I rejoined mine escort, whereupon in a few paces we reached the point where from the embankment a ridge of rock<sup>3</sup> jutted forth; this without difficulty we ascended, and turning to the right over its craggy mass we departed from those everlasting walls of circuit<sup>4</sup>. When we arrived at the place where there is a wide opening below to allow the victims of the scourge to pass, my Leader said: 'Give heed, and see that thou get a front view of these other ill-fated spirits<sup>5</sup>, whose faces thou hast not yet beheld, because they have walked in the same direction with us.' From that ancient bridge we were watching the file which came towards us on the other side, driven in like manner by the lash; and without

<sup>1</sup> Caccianimico's sister, who was persuaded by him to become the mistress of the Marquis of Este.

<sup>2</sup> These two rivers flow on either side of Bologna. '*Sipa*' was Bolognese for *sia*.

<sup>3</sup> The rock-bridge which crosses the first *bolgia*.

<sup>4</sup> The precipices surrounding Malebolge.

<sup>5</sup> These are the seducers; those previously mentioned are the panders.

my asking him the kind Master said: 'Look at that grand figure approaching us, who for all his pain seems not to shed a tear; how majestic is the aspect he still retains! That is Jason, who through his courage and shrewdness carried off from the Colchians the golden fleece. He passed by the island of Lemnos, after its daring women in merciless wise did to death all their male folk; there by love-tokens and skilful speech he beguiled Hypsipyle<sup>1</sup>, that youthful maid, who ere that had deceived all the other dames. There left he her alone in her pregnancy; for that crime is he condemned to this torment, and thereby also Medea is avenged. In his company go those who deceive after this fashion; let it suffice thee to know this much concerning the first valley and those whom it holds in its grip.'

Already were we at the point where the narrow path intersects the second embankment, and makes it a buttress to another arch<sup>2</sup>. From that spot we were ware of people whining in the next trench, who snorted with their snouts and smote themselves with the palms of their hands. The banks were encrusted with a mould, through the effluvia from below adhering there, which was offensive to the eyes and nose. The bottom is so wide a cavity, that from no place could we fully see it without mounting to the summit of the arch, where the bridge reaches its highest point. Thither we came, and thence I saw down in the dike folk immersed in ordure, which appeared to have proceeded from human privies; and while mine eye was exploring there below, I beheld one

The second  
*bolgia*,  
of the  
flatterers.

<sup>1</sup> When the Lemnian women murdered by agreement all the males in the island, Hypsipyle saved her father Thoas.

<sup>2</sup> The path which leads across Malebolge crosses one *bolgia* after another by means of the bridges, and cuts at right angles the embankments which intervene between them.

whose head was so foul with excrement, that whether he were layman or clerk could not be distinguished. He shouted to me: 'Wherefore art thou so eager to stare at me rather than at the other filthy objects?' And I to him: 'Because, if I remember aright, I have seen thee ere this with thy hair unmoistened, and thou art Alessio Interminei of Lucca: that is why I scrutinize thee more than all the rest.' And he in reply, smiting his own pate: 'It is my flatteries, wherewith my tongue was never sated, that have plunged me here below.' Thereupon my Leader said: 'See thou direct thy looks a space further on, so that thine eyes may clearly discern the face of that filthy wench with dishevelled hair, who is scratching herself there with her grimy nails, and at one time sits crouching, at another stands upright. Thais the courtesan<sup>1</sup> is she, who when her lover said: "Am I in high favour with thee?" replied: "In sooth past all belief." And herewith let our eyes be satisfied.'

## CANTO XIX. MALEBOLGE; THE THIRD *BOLGIA*

The third  
*bolgia*,  
of the  
simoniacs.

Shame on thee, Simon Magus! shame on you, his worthless followers<sup>2</sup>! for that, whereas the things of God ought to be devoted to good works, yet in your greed ye prostitute them for gold and silver; now 'tis fitting that for you the trumpet should sound, inasmuch as the third trench is your station. We had already mounted over the next receptacle of the dead, on that part of the bridge of rock which over-

<sup>1</sup> A character in the *Eunuchus* of Terence.

<sup>2</sup> The simoniacs, who are punished in the third *bolgia*, are those who traffic in the things of God for money; they are so called from Simon Magus, the typical instance of this sin; Acts viii. 9 foll.



hangs perpendicularly the middle of the dike. Thou supreme Wisdom, how great is the art thou dost display in heaven, on earth and in the evil world, and how great justice doth thy power dispense! Along the sides and over the bottom I perceived the livid rock to be full of holes, of the same size all of them, and every one round. Not less wide did they seem to me, nor yet larger, than those which in my own fair San Giovanni<sup>1</sup> are constructed as stations for the baptizing priests<sup>2</sup>; one of which not many years since I broke for the sake of one who was losing his life therein; and let this be a guarantee to disabuse all men. Out of the mouth of each protruded a sinner's feet, and his legs as far as the calf, while the rest of his person was within. All of them had the soles of both their feet afire, by reason whereof they twitched their joints with spasms so violent, that withes or cordage would have been rent by them. As, when greased objects are on fire, the flames move only over the outer surface, so did they here from the heel to the toes.

'Master,' said I, 'who is he that displays such fury, Pope  
Nicholas III. writhing more violently than the others his fellows, and over whom plays a fiercer lambent flame?' And he to me: 'If thou willest that by the lower of the two embankments<sup>3</sup> I should carry thee down there, thou shalt learn from him concerning himself and his misdeeds.' And I: 'Whatsoever is thy pleasure approves itself to me: thou art my Lord, and knowest that from thy will I dissociate not myself; thou

<sup>1</sup> The Baptistery of Florence, which at that time was the Cathedral.

<sup>2</sup> These were circular cavities at the four angles of the font, for the priests to stand in.

<sup>3</sup> The embankment on the inner side of the *bolgia* is meant; this is called the lower, because Malebolge slopes towards the centre, and therefore each embankment, according as it is nearer to the centre, rises from a lower-level.

knowest too my unspoken thought.' Thereupon we reached the top of the fourth bank, and turning, descended leftward to the bottom, which was narrow and full of holes. The kind Master set me not down from his haunch, till he brought me nigh to the fissure occupied by him who with his leg so forcibly expressed his agony. 'Thou soul in pain, whoe'er thou art, that being set like a stake hast thy limbs reversed'—such were my opening words—'speak, if thou canst.' I was standing like the friar that confesses the faithless assassin, who after he is planted in the earth recalls him, since he thereby delays his death: and he exclaimed<sup>1</sup>: 'Art thou already standing there, art thou already standing there, Boniface? By several years the record of the future lied to me. Art thou so soon sated with those possessions, with a view to which thou didst not fear to carry off by fraud the beautiful dame<sup>2</sup>, and anon to maltreat her?' I felt like such as, failing to understand a reply which they receive, stand as if mocked, and know not what to reply. Then said Virgil: 'Tell him at once, I am not he, I am not he whom thou supposest'; and I made answer as was enjoined me. Thereat the spirit writhed every muscle of his feet; then with a sigh and in tones of lamentation he said to me: 'What then dost thou request of me? If thou carest so much to learn who I am that for this cause thou hast traversed the embankment, be it known to thee that I was invested with the great mantle; and in very sooth was I an offspring of the bear<sup>3</sup>, being so greedy in promoting the bear-cubs, that in the world above

<sup>1</sup> The speaker is Pope Nicholas III, whose simony was notorious. In what follows he mistakes Dante for Boniface VIII, whom he was expecting to join him, but not so soon.

<sup>2</sup> The Church. With a view to his own advancement Boniface brought about the abdication of his predecessor, Celestine V.

<sup>3</sup> A member of the Orsini family, and as greedy as a bear.

I pocketed wealth, and here I have pocketed myself. Beneath my head the others are dragged down, who were my predecessors in the practice of simony, being squeezed within the fissures of the rock. Thither shall I likewise fall down, when he comes whom I supposed thee to be when I made that abrupt inquiry. But longer is the time already that my feet have been scorching, and that I have been thus reversed, than he will remain planted with his feet afire<sup>1</sup>; for after him shall come a lawless shepherd from the west<sup>2</sup>, still fouler in his practices, who shall lie over both him and me. He shall resemble that Jason, whose story is told in the Maccabees<sup>3</sup>; and even as to that one his sovereign was indulgent, so shall the king of France be to him.'

I know not whether at this point I was overbold, but I just answered him to this effect: 'Prithee tell me, what sum of money did our Lord demand of St. Peter before entrusting the keys to his keeping? Assuredly, his only condition was, "Follow thou me." Neither Peter nor his fellows received gold or silver from Matthias, when he was ordained to the office forfeited by the criminal soul. So keep thy place, for thou art righteously punished, and see thou hold fast the money won by extortions, which emboldened thee so in resisting Charles<sup>4</sup>. And were I not still restrained by the reverence due to the supreme keys

Dante  
denounces  
simony.

<sup>1</sup> In 1300, when Nicholas III is supposed to be speaking, twenty years had elapsed since his death in 1280; between the death of Boniface in 1303 and that of Clement V in 1314 only eleven years elapsed.

<sup>2</sup> Clement V, who came from France. He was elected through the influence of Philip the Fair, and played into his hands; by him the Papal See was removed from Rome to Avignon.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Macc. iv. 7 foll. Jason by a promise of money obtained the high priesthood from Antiochus Epiphanes.

<sup>4</sup> Charles of Anjou.

which thou didst hold in the gladsome life, I would use words stronger still; for your avarice it is which afflicts the world by trampling on the good and uplifting the evil. 'Twas of you shepherds that the Evangelist was thinking, when he saw her who sits on the waters commit fornication with the kings<sup>1</sup>—her, who was born with the seven heads, and took her rule of life from the ten horns, so long as her spouse<sup>2</sup> found pleasure in virtue. Of gold and silver have ye made you your God; and wherein do ye differ from the idolaters, save that they worship one God, and ye a hundred<sup>3</sup>? Ah! Constantine, how great was the evil engendered, not by thy conversion, but by that dower which the first wealthy father received from thee<sup>4</sup>! And while I addressed him in this strain, whether it were anger or conscience that goaded him, he kicked out violently with both his feet. Sure I am that my Leader was well pleased; with such a look of contentment did he steadfastly listen to the utterance of my truthful words. Wherefore he took hold of me with both his arms, and when he had lifted me up even to his breast, he ascended once more by the same way that he came down; nor did he weary of clasping me thus closely, till he bore me up to the summit of the arch, which is the crossing from the fourth to the fifth embankment. There he gently deposited his burden—gently, by reason of the steep and rugged rock-bridge, which even for goats would be no easy passage. From thence another valley was disclosed to me.

<sup>1</sup> See Rev. xvii. Dante's interpretation of the seven heads and the ten horns in a favourable sense does not suit the passage.

<sup>2</sup> The Pope.

<sup>3</sup> i.e. a hundred pieces of money.

<sup>4</sup> Constantine's Donation of the States of the Church to Pope Sylvester I. This is now known to be fictitious.



CANTO XX. MALEBOLGE; THE FOURTH  
*BOLGIA*

A new punishment must be the subject of my verse, and furnish material for the twentieth Canto of the first Canzone, which treats of those plunged in Hell. Already I was wholly set on gazing into the depth thus disclosed to view, which was bathed in tears of anguish, when I perceived folk silently weeping, who approached along the curve of the valley, at the pace which in our world a religious procession observes. When they were more immediately beneath mine eyes, they seemed to me, one and all, to be strangely contorted between the chin and the commencement of the chest; for their faces were turned toward their loins, and they must needs come on backward, inasmuch as seeing in front of them was denied them<sup>1</sup>. Haply sometime through a stroke of palsy a man hath been in this wise wholly contorted, but such a case I never saw, nor do I believe that it exists.

The fourth *bolgia*, of the necromancers.

So may God grant thee, Reader, to profit by thy reading—consider for thyself, I pray, how could I keep mine eyes from weeping, when I saw nigh at hand our human form so distorted, that the tears from the eyes laved the buttocks through the cleft. In sooth I wept, leaning against a block of the hard rock-bridge, so that my Guide said to me: ‘Art thou too in the number of the foolish? Here piety lives when pity is wholly dead. Who is more criminal than he, who when contemplating God’s judgements introduces feeling? Raise, raise thy head, and regard the man for whom in sight of the Thebans the earth opened, whereat they all

Amphiaraus, Teiresias, Aruns.

<sup>1</sup> The faces of the necromancers are reversed on their bodies, because during their lifetime they pretended to look forward into the future.

exclaimed: "Whither art thou falling, Amphiaraus<sup>1</sup>? why dost thou quit the war?" Nor ceased he to plunge downward till he reached Minos, who lays his clutch on all. Mark how his shoulders are, where was his breast; because he desired to see too far before him, he looks behind him and walks backward. Behold Teiresias<sup>2</sup>, who altered his aspect, when from a male he became a female, changing his limbs in every part; and thereafter he must needs strike again with his wand the two serpents together wreathed, ere he could reassume his manly plumes<sup>3</sup>. That one who turns his back to Teiresias' front is Aruns<sup>4</sup>, who in the mountains of Luni, where the Carrara peasant that dwells below weeds the fields, abode in his cave amid white marble rocks, whence the view of sea and stars was not excluded from his eyes. And she who with her loosened tresses hides her breasts which thou seest not, and hath every hairy part on the farther side, was Manto<sup>5</sup>, who after making quest through many lands, fixed her habitation at last at my birthplace: concerning this I will that thou lend me thine ear awhile.

'After that her father departed from life, and Bacchus' city<sup>6</sup> fell into servitude, she for a long time wandered through

<sup>1</sup> The soothsayer Amphiaraus was one of the Seven against Thebes, who in the course of that expedition was swallowed up by the earth.

<sup>2</sup> The Theban soothsayer, who according to the story was changed into a woman in consequence of his having separated two serpents with his staff, and recovered his sex when he met the same serpents and struck them again.

<sup>3</sup> His beard.

<sup>4</sup> The Etruscan soothsayer, who dwelt in the mountains where are the Carrara marble quarries.

<sup>5</sup> Daughter of Teiresias. The story of the foundation of Mantua, which is here put into Virgil's mouth, is curiously different from that which he has himself given in *Aen.* x. 198-200.

<sup>6</sup> Thebes. It was captured by the Epigoni.

the world. On earth in fair Italy, at the foot of the Alpine chain which is the boundary of Germany above Tirol, there lies a lake by name Benaco<sup>1</sup>. By a thousand fountains and more, I ween, between Garda and Val Camonica the Pennine Alps<sup>2</sup> are moistened with the water which stagnates in the above-named lake. Midway in that region there is a spot<sup>3</sup>, where the shepherd of Trent, and he of Brescia, and he of Verona, might each give his blessing, if he were passing by that way. Peschiera, that fortress fair and strong to defy the men of Brescia and Bergamo, lies where the surrounding shore sinks to its lowest level. There must all the water descend which Benaco cannot contain within its bosom, and forming a river it flows down through green pastures. So soon as it starts on its course, it is no longer called Benaco but Mencio, as far as Governo, where it falls into the Po. Not far has it flowed when it reaches a plain, wherein it spreads, converting it into a marsh, and at times in summer it is wont to be pernicious. Passing by this way the unwedded maid in the midst of the morass perceived dry land, uncultivated and devoid of inhabitants. There, to avoid all intercourse with mankind, she remained with her attendants to practise her arts, and lived, and left there her body tenantless. Afterward the men who were scattered through the

Manto,  
and the  
foundation  
of Mantua.

<sup>1</sup> Benacus was the Latin name of the Lago di Garda.

<sup>2</sup> The Pennine Alps are in reality the range of which the Great St. Bernard is the centre, and this does not suit the present passage. But Dante is probably following Orosius, one of his leading authorities in geography, who says (*Historiae adversus Paganos*, i. 2, 60) that the Pennine Alps lie to the south-west of Rhaetia (the Tyrol); this is just the required position here.

<sup>3</sup> The place intended probably is the mouth of the river Tignalga near Campione on the western shore of the lake, which until 1785 was the meeting-point of the three dioceses here referred to.

neighbourhood congregated to that place, which was strong by reason of the morass which lay on every side: over those dead bones they built the city, and after her who first chose the site, without further augury they named it Mantua. In former days its inhabitants were more numerous, before the senseless counts of Casalodi were led into a trap by Pinamonte<sup>1</sup>. Wherefore I inform thee, so that, if ever thou hearest the origin of my city narrated otherwise, no fiction may pervert the truth.'

Other  
necro-  
mancers.

And I: 'Master, thy statements are so indisputable to me, and inspire me with so great confidence, that all others would be as dust and ashes to me. But tell me concerning the folk that advance hitherward, if thou seest any among them that is noteworthy; for it is to this point only that my mind reverts.' He made reply: 'That one from whose cheeks his beard descends over his dark shoulders, was augur at the time when Greece was so bereft of men-folk, that hardly enough remained to supply the cradles<sup>2</sup>; and 'twas he that at Aulis in company with Calchas announced the moment for cutting the first cable. Eurypylus was his name, and to this effect doth my lofty Tragedy<sup>3</sup> in a certain passage sing of him; thou knowest it well, who knowest its every line. That other one, who is so spare in the flanks, was Michael Scot<sup>4</sup>, who in very sooth understood the play of magic wiles.

<sup>1</sup> Pinamonte, a citizen of Mantua, put himself forward as a popular leader, and after persuading the head of the Casalodi, who were the chief family in Mantua, to remove a number of the foremost aristocrats, succeeded in expelling or massacring the Casalodi themselves.

<sup>2</sup> i. e. to beget children. The time of the Trojan war is meant.

<sup>3</sup> The *Aeneid* is called a tragedy because of its elevated subject and style. The passage referred to is *Aen.* ii. 114-9, where however no mention is made of Aulis.

<sup>4</sup> The learned Scotchman, who was reputed to be a wizard.



Behold Guido Bonatti <sup>1</sup>, behold Asdente <sup>2</sup>, who now would fain have given his attention to his leather and his thread, but all too late doth his repentance come. Behold the miserable dames, who abandoned the needle, the shuttle and the spindle, and became sorceresses, practising witchcraft with herbs and effigies.

‘But come away, for Cain with his bundle of thorns <sup>3</sup> is even now on the boundary line of the two hemispheres, touching the wave on the further side of Seville, and already yesternight the moon was full; well mayst thou recollect it, for on a certain occasion in the depths of the forest it served thee no ill turn.’ Thus spake he to me, and the while we pursued our journey.

## CANTO XXI. MALEBOLGE; THE FIFTH *BOLGIA*

Thus from one bridge we passed to another, conversing on other subjects whereof my Comedy cares not to sing, and we had reached its summit, when we paused to regard the next rift of Malebolge and the vain laments proceeding therefrom; and I perceived it to be wondrous dark. As in the Arsenal of Venice in winter time the sticky pitch doth boil for the caulking of their unsound vessels, for it is not the season for voyaging, but instead thereof one builds him a new craft, another stops the ribs of a ship that hath often crossed the main; one hammers in the fore part, another in the aft;

*The fifth bolgia, of the jobbers; the boiling pitch.*

<sup>1</sup> An astrologer of Forlì.

<sup>2</sup> A shoemaker of Parma, who professed himself a prophet.

<sup>3</sup> The Man in the Moon, here used for the moon itself. The meaning of the passage is that the moon is setting, and the time intended is about 6 a.m. on Easter Eve.

some fashion oars, and some twist cordage, while others patch the foresail or the mainsail; so by the agency, not of fire, but of heaven-directed art, down beneath us there boiled a dense pitch, which besmeared the bank on either hand. This I beheld, but within it I saw naught save the bubbles raised by the boiling, and the whole mass swelling up, and then, as it shrank, subsiding.

The devils  
and the  
man of  
Lucca.

While I was gazing fixedly downwards, my Leader exclaimed: 'Look, look!' and drew me toward him from the place where I was standing. Thereat I turned me, like one impatient to behold that which he ought to flee, yet overpowered by sudden panic, who for all his looking delays not his departure; and behind us I saw a swarthy devil approaching at full speed over the bridge of rock. Ah! how fierce was his look! and how cruel in mien did he seem to me, with outspread wings and light of foot! His shoulders, which were high and pointed, were laden with the two haunches of a sinner, the tendons of whose ankles he held in his grip. From our bridge he exclaimed: 'Ye Malebranche<sup>1</sup>, lo! one of the elders of Santa Zita<sup>2</sup>; plunge him beneath, for I am returning once more to the city which I have well provided with such characters; there every man is a jobber, barring Bonturo<sup>3</sup>; there for a bribe "No" is exchanged for "Aye."' He flung him down, and returned along the hard rock; never was mastiff, when his leash was slipped, so impatient to pursue a thief. The other was engulfed, and returned doubled up to the surface; but the devils, who by the bridge were screened from view, exclaimed:

<sup>1</sup> A collective name for these demons.

<sup>2</sup> 'Elders' was the title of the chief magistrates of Lucca, which city is here called by the name of its patron saint.

<sup>3</sup> This is ironical, for he was a notorious jobber.

'The Holy Face' avails not here; swimming here is a different matter from swimming in the Serchio<sup>2</sup>; wherefore, if thou desirest not a taste of our prongs, rise not above the surface of the pitch.' Thereupon with a hundred hooks and more they gripped him, saying: 'Here 'tis well for thee to dance under cover, so that thou mayst pilfer in secret, if thou canst.' In similar wise the cooks cause their underlings to immerse with their hooks the meat within the cauldron, to prevent it from floating.

The kindly Master said to me: 'In order that thy presence here may not be noticed, crouch down behind a crag to screen thyself somewhat; and whatever treatment I may be exposed to, have thou no fear, for I am conversant with the matter, having once before taken part in such-like negotiations.' Then he passed on beyond the summit of the bridge, and so soon as he found himself on the sixth embankment, good need had he to show a bold front. With a fury and a rush, like that with which dogs dash forth behind a mendicant, who at the place where he stops proceeds at once to beg, they issued from beneath the little bridge, and turned all their gaffs against him; but he exclaimed: 'Keep from mischief, all of you. Before I am grappled by your hook, let one of you advance to listen to me, and after that take thought for gripping me.' With one voice they cried: 'Let Malacoda go'; so one came on, while the rest remained stationary, and as he approached him he said: 'What good will it do him?' 'Thinkest thou, Malacoda,' said my Master, 'when I have come hither, as thou seest, unmolested thus far by all your hindrances, that the will of God and propitious destiny have

<sup>1</sup> An ancient crucifix, which the people of Lucca invoked in time of need.

<sup>2</sup> The river of Lucca.

no part in this? Suffer us to proceed, for it is the will of Heaven that I should guide another along this wild road.' At this so crestfallen was he, that he let the hook fall at his feet, saying to the others: 'Now let him not be wounded.'

The devils  
accompany  
them.

Thereupon my Leader said to me: 'O thou who sittest crouching lowly between the huge boulders of the bridge, with confidence thou mayst now return to me.' So I set forth, and came to him with all speed, and the whole company of devils advanced, so that I feared they would not keep the agreement. Such fear I once saw the infantry display, who came forth under a compact from Caprona<sup>1</sup>, when they found themselves girt with so great a host of foes. I drew every inch of me close to my Leader's side, but mine eyes I withdrew not from their countenances, which wore no pleasant aspect. They lowered their hooks, saying one to the other: 'Shall I touch him up behind?' and the answer came: 'Aye, mind you poke at him.' But the demon who was parleying with my Leader turned with all speed, saying: 'Hold, hold, Scarmiglione.' Then to us he said: 'Further along this line of bridges one cannot go, seeing that the sixth arch lies all in fragments at the bottom of the ravine; but if ye desire in any case to proceed, then make your way over this bank of rock; close by there is another bridge which provides a passage. Yesterday, five hours before the present time, completed twelve hundred and sixty-six years from the time when the way was broken<sup>2</sup>. I am sending in that

<sup>1</sup> What is here referred to is the evacuation of Caprona, a fort in the Pisan territory, by the Pisans in 1289, when it was captured by the people of Lucca and the Florentines.

<sup>2</sup> The time here intended is the date of our Lord's crucifixion, when the rocks were rent. As Dante believed that Christ died in the thirty-fourth year of his age, this gives 1300 as the present date.



direction some of these my varlets to see whether any spirit is airing himself; do ye go with them, for they will not be mischievous. Lead on, Alichino and Calcabrina'—thus commenced his orders—'and thou, Cagnazzo; and let Barbariccia guide the band of ten. Come thou too, Libicocco, and Draghignazzo, Ciriatto with the tusks, and Graffiacane, Farfarello and hare-brained Rubicante. Pursue your quest around the boiling tar; let these be unharmed till they reach the next line of bridges, which throughout its whole length crosses the pits unbroken.'

'Ah me!' said I, 'Master, what is this I see? O, if <sup>Daute's</sup> thou knowest the way, let us go alone without an escort, for <sup>terror.</sup> I desire none for myself. If thou art as watchful as is thy wont, seest thou not how they grind their teeth, and by their eyebrows threaten us with wiles?' And he to me: 'Prithee, have no fear: let them grind their teeth just as they please; this they do because of the sufferers who are stewing.' Leftward along the embankment they faced about; but first each of them held his tongue between his teeth toward their captain as a token, and he for a trumpet used his hinder parts.

## CANTO XXII. MALEBOLGE; THE FIFTH *BOLGIA*

Erewhile I have seen cavalry start on the march, or commence an attack, or set themselves in array, and on occasion seek safety in flight: I have seen reconnoitring parties scour your land, ye citizens of Arezzo, and raiding bands withal, and the clash of tournaments and tilting-jousts, at one time to the sound of the trumpet, at another of the <sup>The escort of devils.</sup>

bell, with drums and fortress signals, in native or in foreign wise; yet never before to fife so strange saw I cavalry or infantry start, nor vessel steer by signal from the land or sight of star. Along with the ten demons we went our way; O escort dire! but 'in church consort with saints, in the eating-house with gluttons.' Mine eyes were wholly fixed on the pitch, to reconnoitre every feature of the gulf, and of the folk that seethed therein. As dolphins move, when with arched back they warn mariners to take thought for saving their vessel<sup>1</sup>, so ever and anon to alleviate his pain did one of the sinful souls expose his back, and conceal it again with more than lightning speed. And as in a ditch frogs seat themselves on the water's edge with only their muzzles emerging, so that their feet and the rest of their body are hidden, so were the sinners seated on either side: but no sooner did Barbariccia approach than they withdrew within the boiling mass.

The  
Navarrese  
jobber.

I saw—and at the thought of it my heart still palpitates—one of them lingering, even as it chances that when one frog jumps off another remains behind. And Graffiacane, who was nearest in front of him, caught with his hook his locks steeped in pitch, and dragged him up, so that he looked to me like an otter. Already I knew them all by name, so carefully did I observe them when they were selected; and when they addressed one another I noticed how they were called. 'O Rubicante, see thou fix thy claws in his back so as to flay him'; thus with one voice did all the accursed creatures cry. And I: 'My Master, discover, if thou canst, who is the poor wretch that hath fallen into his adversaries' hands.' My Leader drew near to his side, and asked him whence he

<sup>1</sup> Dolphins were regarded as a sign of the approach of bad weather, as porpoises are on our coasts.

came; and he replied: 'Of the kingdom of Navarre I was a native<sup>1</sup>. My mother placed me in a gentleman's service, having borne me to a knave who ruined himself and his belongings. 'Thereafter I was waitingman to good king Theobald<sup>2</sup>; and in that position I took to jobbery, for which in this heat I render an account.' And Ciriatto, from either side of whose mouth, as from a hog's, a tusk protruded, let him feel how one of these could rend. Among malicious cats the mouse had fallen; but Barbariccia threw his arms round him, saying: 'You stand off, while I am gripping him'; then, turning his face toward my Master, he said: 'Question him further, if thou desirest to learn aught more from him, before he is lacerated by others.' My Leader said: 'Then tell me now of the other guilty souls; knowest thou any beneath the pitch that is from Italy?' And he: 'But now I quitted one who came from a neighbouring land<sup>3</sup>; I would I were still in concealment with him, that I might have no fear of claws or hooks.' And Libicocco said: 'We have borne with this too long,' and caught his arm with his gaff, so that, when he tore it, he carried off a sinew. Next Draghignazzo was minded to seize him by the legs below; but thereupon their captain turned him this way and that with frowning aspect. When they were somewhat quieted, without delay my Leader inquired of him, while his eyes were still fixed on his wound: 'Who was the spirit, whom thou sayest that thou didst quit in an evil hour to come to shore?' And he replied: 'Twas Friar Gomita, he of Gallura, a vessel of every kind of fraud, who had in his power his master's enemies, and treated them so, that they all express

<sup>1</sup> His name is said to have been Ciampolo.

<sup>2</sup> Thibaut II, king of Navarre from 1253.

<sup>3</sup> Sardinia is meant.

satisfaction therewith<sup>1</sup>: he received a bribe, and let them go “quietly” (to use his expression); and in his other functions too no mean jobber was he, but a proficient. With him Master Michel Zanche of Logodoro<sup>2</sup> consorts, and of talking of Sardinia their tongues never weary. Oh me! look at the other how he grinds his teeth; I’ve more to tell thee, but I fear he is designing to scratch my scurf.’ And the praefect in command, turning towards Farfarello, who was leering sideways with a view to striking, cried: ‘Off with thee, vile bird.’

He outwits  
the devils.

Thereupon the affrighted being once more spake: ‘If it be your pleasure to see or to listen to spirits from Tuscany or Lombardy, I will make them come. But let those wicked claws withdraw a space, so that they may not fear their vengeance; and I, abiding where I am, for myself, who am but one, will cause seven to appear when I whistle, as is our practice when any of us comes forth from the pitch.’ At these words Cagnazzo upraised his mouth, and said with a shake of the head: ‘Listen to his knavish device for throwing himself down.’ Whereupon he, who possessed a great wealth of artifices, made reply: ‘Only too knavish am I, when I provide an increase of suffering for my friends.’ Alichino could not refrain, but in opposition to the others said to him: ‘If thou castest thyself down, I shall not follow thee with speed of foot, but shall hover on the wing over the

<sup>1</sup> Sardinia at this time belonged to the Pisans, and was divided into four provinces, the north-eastern of which was called Gallura. In the latter part of the thirteenth century this was governed by the Pisan Nino Visconti, and during his absence Frate Gomita was his administrator. He released from prison a number of his superio’s enemies for a bribe, and was afterwards hanged for this crime.

<sup>2</sup> Logodoro was the north-west province, and Michel Zanche was its administrator.



pitch; let us leave the summit, and let the bank serve as a screen<sup>1</sup>, that we may see whether thou by thyself art cleverer than we.' Now, Reader, there is new sport for thee to hear of! One and all, they turned their eyes toward the opposite side; he first, who was most indisposed to do so. The Navarrese chose well his opportunity, planted his feet on the ground, and in a moment leapt, and escaped from their plot. Thereat they all were heart-stricken for their mistake, but chiefly he who was the author of the failure; wherefore he started off, crying: 'I'm down upon thee.' But little did this avail him, for the speed of wings could not outstrip the speed of fear; the other plunged beneath, and the devil as he flew upraised his breast: even so at the approach of the falcon doth the duck in an instant dive below, while the falcon returns upward in fell despondent mood. Calcabrina, enraged at the trick, went flying in his wake, delighted that the other should escape, so that he might have the tussle; and no sooner had the jobber disappeared, than he turned his claws against his fellow, and they clutched each other over the dike. But Alichino like a full-grown sparrow-hawk fixed his talons well in him, and they fell both together into the middle of the seething pool. The heat quickly separated the combatants, but for all that they had no chance of rising, so thickly had they smeared their wings. Barbariccia, dejected like the rest of his company, caused four of them to fly with their gaffs toward the opposite side, and with all speed they descended to their respective posts on either hand; then they held out

<sup>1</sup> Ciampolo and the devils were high up on one side of the *bolgia*, and the bank here spoken of was near the pitch on the opposite side; this bank would serve to screen the devils from the spirits whom it was proposed to call up. When their eyes were turned in that direction, Ciampolo seizes the opportunity to plunge downward and escape.

their hooks towards those sticking in the pitch, who were by this time seething beneath the surface; and in this predicament we left them.

## CANTO XXIII. MALEBOLGE; THE SIXTH *BOLGIA*

The Poets  
escape from  
the devils.

In silence and solitude without escort we pursued our way, one in front and the other following, as the Minorites<sup>1</sup> walk along the road. Through the recent wrangle my thoughts were turned on Aesop's fable, where he told the story of the frog and the mouse<sup>2</sup>, for 'now' and 'at present' correspond not more closely than do these to each other, if with attention due the beginning is rightly coupled with the end. And as from one thought another springs forth, so did that one anon give birth to a second, which redoubled my former fear. I reflected on this wise: 'It is our doing that these devils have been laughed to scorn, and that too with such hurt and ridicule, that I trow it sorely vexes them. If on their malice anger supervenes, they will pursue us with greater fury than the hound doth the hare on which he pounces.' Already I felt all my hair stand on end through fright, and my attention was backward turned, when

<sup>1</sup> The Franciscans, who were wont to walk in single file.

<sup>2</sup> The fable, which passed for one of Aesop's, was that a mouse and a frog came together to a river which they had to cross, and as the mouse could not swim, the frog proposed to convey her across by tying her to his leg: during their passage the frog triéd to drown the mouse, but at this moment a kite swooped down and carried off the frog, setting the mouse at liberty. The moral is, that a person who conspires against another, as Alichino did against Ciampolo, may bring disaster upon himself.

I said: 'Master, I am in fear of the Malebranche, if thou dost not speedily conceal thyself and me; even now they are behind us: I picture them so to myself that I already feel them.' And he: 'Were I a mirror, I should not more immediately assimilate thine outward form, than I now receive the image of thy mind. This very moment thy thoughts associated themselves with mine, corresponding in point of view and tone of feeling, so that from the two I evolved a single purpose. If so be the hillside towards our right slopes in such wise that we may descend into the next trench, we shall escape from the pursuit which we anticipate.' He had not finished setting forth this plan, when I saw them coming on outspread wings, and not far off, with the design of seizing us. My Leader in a moment caught me, like the mother that is roused by the sound of cries, and sees close at hand the blazing flames, who seizes her child and flies, and, taking more thought for him than for herself, tarries not even to put on an under-garment; and from the summit of the rude bank in a reclining posture he slid down the declivity of rock, which encloses one side of the next trench. Never so swiftly did water traverse a conduit, to turn the wheel of a mill on land<sup>1</sup>, when it approaches nearest to the paddles, as sped my Master along that bank, bearing me off on his breast, not as his companion but his son. Scarcely had his feet touched the surface of the bottom, when they were on the hill right over us; but at this point there was no cause for fear, for the Providence supreme, who was pleased to appoint them to the service of the fifth dike, deprives them all of power to depart thence.

There below we found a painted folk, who were moving

<sup>1</sup> The mill on land is here distinguished from mills in rivers, where the water flows below.

The sixth  
*bolgia*,  
 of the  
 hypocrites;  
 the Frati  
 Godenti.

round with steps exceeding slow, shedding tears, and in their aspect weary and worn. Capes they wore with low cowls coming down in front of their eyes, in fashion resembling those which for the monks in Cologne are made. Without these are gilded, so that the effect is dazzling; but within they are all of lead<sup>1</sup>, and so heavy, that, compared with them, those which Frederic imposed<sup>2</sup> were light as straw. O mantle burdensome to all eternity! In their company we turned once more, keeping ever to the left, and hearkening to their sad laments; but by reason of the weight that weary folk came on so slowly, that every step brought us abreast of fresh associates. Wherefore to my Leader I said: 'Prithee discover some one distinguished by his deeds or name, and as we walk cast thine eyes around.' And one who recognized the speech of Tuscany exclaimed behind us: 'Moderate your speed, ye that press onward so through the gloomy air; maybe from me thou wilt obtain thy wish.' Thereat my Leader turned him, saying: 'Wait; and afterward in walking keep to his pace.' I halted, and perceived two spirits, who betrayed by their looks great impatience to join me, but their burden and the crowded way retarded them. When they reached me, long time with eyes askance they gazed at me, nor spake a word; at last, turning one to the other they said: 'From the movement of his throat this one seems to be alive; and if they be dead, through what immunity go they on their way without the covering of the ponderous robe?' Then to me they said: 'Thou Tuscan, who art come unto the assembly of the doleful hypocrites, disdain not

<sup>1</sup> The contrast between the outer and the inner side of the capes symbolizes the double-faced nature of hypocrisy, which is punished here.

<sup>2</sup> The Emperor Frederic II was said to have put criminals to death by placing them in leaden capes over a fire.



to tell us who thou art.' And I to them: 'In the great city by the fair stream of Arno was I born and bred, and I still wear the body which was ever mine. But who are ye, over whose cheeks such grievous pain as I perceive drips down? and what punishment is this which so clearly reveals itself in you?' And one of them replied: 'The orange-tinted capes are so charged with lead, that the weight thereof causes those who support them to emit these cries. Jolly Friars<sup>1</sup> we were, and of Bologna, myself named Catalano, and this one Loderingo; and by thy city were we two associated to maintain her peace, whereto one man alone is wont to be appointed; of our conduct the evidence remains near the Gardingo<sup>2</sup>.'

I began: 'Ye Friars, your misdeeds . . .,' but more Caiaphas. I said not, for mine eyes were assailed by the sight of one crucified with three stakes upon the ground. When he beheld me, he writhed his whole frame, panting forth sighs into his beard: and Friar Catalano, noticing that, said to me: 'He whom thou seest thus transfixed, gave counsel to the Pharisees, that it was expedient to cause one man to suffer for the people<sup>3</sup>. Naked he lies across the road, as thou seest, and he is doomed, when any passes, first<sup>4</sup> to feel his weight; and similarly his father-in-law is tormented in this

<sup>1</sup> Their proper name was Cavalieri di Santa Maria, an Order of Knighthood which was established with the object of reconciling feuds and protecting the weak. They obtained the nickname of Frati Godenti from their easy manner of life. The two here mentioned were invited to Florence to exercise conjointly the office of Podestà, but by their hypocrisy and peculation they forfeited all public confidence.

<sup>2</sup> The destruction by the populace of a palace in this quarter of Florence during their time of office testifies to the condition of the city under their administration.

<sup>3</sup> This was an act of hypocrisy on Caiaphas' part.

<sup>4</sup> i. e. before he has passed.

dike, and the other members of the council, which was for the Jews a source of woes.' Then saw I Virgil marvel at him who was so ignominiously extended in the form of a cross in everlasting banishment. Anon he addressed the Friar in the following words: 'Be pleased to tell us, if thou mayst, whether toward the right there lies any passage, whereby, without compelling the black angels to come to deliver us from this gulf, we may both be able to go forth from hence.' Thereto he replied: 'Nearer than thou expectest there is a ridge of rock, which starts from the great encircling wall, and crosses all the wild valleys, save that at this one it is broken and doth not span it: ye will be able to ascend over the fallen mass, which slopes at the side, and at the bottom rises.' My Leader paused a moment pensively; then said he: 'Ill did that other one explain the matter, who grips with his hook the sinners yonder<sup>1</sup>.' And the Friar: 'In Bologna<sup>2</sup> erewhile I heard vices manifold ascribed to the Devil, and among them this—that he is a liar, and the father of lies.' Thereupon with mighty strides my Leader departed, his countenance overcast by a shade of anger; so I too quitted those burdened spirits, following the print of his beloved feet.

#### CANTO XXIV. MALEBOLGE; THE SEVENTH *BOLGIA*

In that part of the early year, in which the sun tempers his locks beneath Aquarius<sup>3</sup>, and now the nights retire toward

<sup>1</sup> Malacoda had said that the bridge was standing.

<sup>2</sup> Catalano was a native of Bologna, in which city there was a School of Theology.

<sup>3</sup> In the latter part of January and the beginning of February, when the sun is in Aquarius.

the south<sup>1</sup>; when the hoarfrost portrays on the ground her white sister's likeness, but the fine point of her pen doth not last long<sup>2</sup>; the poverty-stricken rustic rises and looks round, and sees the country side a sheet of white, whereat he smites his thigh, returns within doors and restlessly bewails him, like a poor wretch who is at his wit's end; anon he comes back again and regains hope, when he sees that in a brief space the world hath changed its aspect, and takes his staff and drives his sheep forth to pasture: such dismay did my Master cause me, when I saw his brow so overcast, and with like speed was the remedy applied to the wound; for when we reached the ruined bridge, my Leader turned toward me with that sweet look which I first beheld at the Mountain's foot<sup>3</sup>. Then<sup>4</sup>, after taking counsel awhile with himself, first contemplating well the broken mass, he opened wide his arms and took hold of me. And even as one who deliberates as he works, and seems ever to be taking thought beforehand, so, while he lifted me up toward the summit of a vast block, he was reconnoitring another crag, and said: 'Hold fast next by that one, but first make trial whether it will bear thee.' That was no path for one wearing the cape<sup>5</sup>, for, though my Guide was light and I was lifted by him, hardly could we clamber up from point to point of rock. And had it not been that on that embankment the hillside was lower than on the opposite one—for him I cannot speak, but for myself I should have been quite foredone. But seeing that Male-

The ascent of the embankment.

<sup>1</sup> i. e. the nights shorten.

<sup>2</sup> When the hoar-frost produces the effect of snow, but easily melts in the sun.

<sup>3</sup> The foot of the Mountain of Salvation, where Virgil first met Dante.

<sup>4</sup> Virgil and Dante now climb up the embankment over the ruins of the broken bridge.

<sup>5</sup> The hypocrites are meant.

bolge slopes downward throughout toward the opening of the lowest pit, the position of each trench brings it to pass that one side is higher and the other lower; and thus at last we mounted to the point whence the last stone <sup>1</sup> splits off.

The seventh  
*bolgia*,  
of the  
thieves.

The breath was so exhausted from my lungs when I reached the summit, that I could no farther go; nay, so soon as I arrived I sat me down. 'By such exertion it befits thee now to shake off sloth,' my Master said, 'for 'tis not by reposing on down or beneath a coverlet that fame is attained; and he that without fame wastes away his life, leaves behind on earth no more trace of himself than smoke in air or foam on water. Rise then, o'ercome thy weariness by the spirit which in every contest wins the day, if it fail not through the burden of the flesh. Thou hast before thee a longer stairway<sup>2</sup> to mount; 'tis not sufficient to have escaped from these; if thou comprehendest me, see thou profit thereby.' Thereupon I rose, feigning to be better supplied with breath than I felt myself to be; and I said: 'Proceed, for I am strong and valiant.' We pursued our way over the rocky ridge, which was rugged, narrow and difficult, and steeper far than the former one. As we went I talked to conceal my lassitude; and anon from the next dike a voice proceeded, ill-suited to form articulate words. What it said I know not, though I was already on the summit of the arch which crosses here, but the speaker appeared to be inflamed with rage. My looks were downward turned, but owing to the darkness mine eyes, being those of a living man, could not penetrate to the bottom; wherefore I said: 'Master, haste thee to reach the next embankment, and let us descend the escarpment, for, even as I understand not what I hear from this point, so, when I look

<sup>1</sup> sc. of the broken bridge.

<sup>2</sup> The ascent of the Mountain of Purgatory.



down, I can distinguish nothing.' 'My only answer,' said he, 'is compliance with thy wish; to a praiseworthy request deeds without words are the rightful complement.'

We descended from the head of the bridge, where it joins <sup>The</sup> the eighth bank, and then the trench <sup>serpents.</sup> <sup>1</sup> was clearly revealed to me; and within it I beheld serpents, a dire multitude, and so various in kind, that even now the recollection of them pines my blood. No more let sandy Libya <sup>2</sup> vaunt herself; for, if she gives birth to water-snakes and asps which dart, with trailing adders and spotted and two-headed serpents, yet, even with all Ethiopia to boot, and the region which borders on the Red Sea, she never displayed plagues so many and so dire. In the midst of this merciless and most fell swarm folk were running naked and panic-stricken, without hope of sheltering cranny or magic stone <sup>3</sup>. Behind their backs their hands were bound by serpents; these fixed in the loins their head and tail, and were knotted together in front.

And lo! one of them who was hard by our bank was <sup>Vanni</sup> assailed by a snake, which transfixed him at the point where <sup>Fucci.</sup> the neck is attached to the shoulders. And never was O or I so quickly written <sup>4</sup>, as he took fire and burnt, and turned helplessly all to ashes where he fell; and as he lay thus in ruin on the ground, the dust reunited of itself, and instantly resumed the same form. In such wise, as the most famous

<sup>1</sup> The seventh *bolgia*, where the thieves are punished.

<sup>2</sup> By Libya here is meant the Roman province of Africa, which lay to the west of Egypt. The names of the serpents of that country which Dante here gives are taken from Lucan, *Phars.* ix. 706 foll. The English equivalents which appear in the translation are borrowed in the main from the notes in Haskins' edition of that poem.

<sup>3</sup> This was the stone called heliotrope, which had the power of rendering the wearer invisible.

<sup>4</sup> These letters can be written with a single stroke of the pen.

sages testify, the phoenix dies, and anon is born again, when it draws nigh to its five hundredth year : in its lifetime it feeds not on herbs or grain, but only on tears of frankincense and amomum ; and spikenard and myrrh are its winding sheet at last. And even as one who falls and knows not how, overpowered by an evil spirit which drags him down to earth<sup>1</sup>, or by other obstruction which impedes a man ; and when he rises doth gaze around him, all bewildered by the dire agony which he hath undergone, and as he looks emits sighs : such was the sinner when thereafter he arose. Ah ! how stern is the might of God, which in retribution rains down such-like blows !

His  
prophecy.

My Leader then inquired of him who he was ; and he replied : ' From Tuscany no long time since I was hurled down into this wild gorge. I loved the life of a brute, not that of a man, like a mule that I was ; I am Vanni Fucci<sup>2</sup>, a beast, and Pistoia was my worthy den.' And I to my Leader : ' Bid him not to shirk, and inquire what sin it was that brought him here below, for I have known him as a man of blood and fury.' On hearing this, the sinner made no pretence, but fixed his eyes attentively upon me, while the sad hue of shame overspread his face : anon he said : ' Greater grief is mine that thou hast found me in the misery wherein thou seest me, than when I was banished from the former life. That which thou desirest of me I cannot refuse : it is because I robbed the richly ornamented sacristy<sup>3</sup> that I am placed so deep below—a deed which erewhile was falsely imputed to another. But, that thou mayst not rejoice in

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Luke ix. 42.

<sup>2</sup> A violent partisan of the Black Guefts in Pistoia.

<sup>3</sup> The sacristy of St. James in the church of San Zeno in Pistoia ; for this crime another man was hanged.

having seen me thus, if ever thou dost emerge from the realms of darkness, open thine ears to mine announcement, and hearken. Pistoia first is depopulated of Black Guelfs; anon Florence changes her families and her fashions<sup>1</sup>. Mars draws from Val di Magra a mist shrouded in wild clouds<sup>2</sup>, and with the rush of a fierce tempest on the field of Piceno an engagement will be fought; whereupon he will straightway burst the cloud, so that thereby every White Guelf will be wounded; and this I have told thee, that thou mayst have whereat to grieve.'

CANTO XXV. MALEBOLGE; THE SEVENTH  
*BOLGIA*

As he ceased to speak the robber upraised his hands with both the thumbs protruding, and cried: 'Take that, thou God, for at thee do I level them.' From that time forth serpents were endeared to me, for one of them at that moment twined itself round his throat, as if to say: 'Not a word more shalt thou speak'; and another round his arms, and bound him fast, clinching itself so tight in front, that he could not make a jerk with them. Ah! Pistoia, Pistoia, why delayest thou to reduce thyself to ashes and thus cease to be, seeing thou surpassesest in wickedness the seed whence

Vanni Fucci  
is mastered  
by two  
serpents.

<sup>1</sup> In May, 1301, the Black Guelfs were driven out of Pistoia; in November, 1301, the White Guelfs were driven out of Florence by Charles of Valois.

<sup>2</sup> The 'mist' is Moroello Malaspina, through whose territory, the Lunigiana in the north-west of Tuscany, the river Macra flowed. He was captain of the Florentine Black Guelfs, when in company with the Lucchesi in 1302 they attacked Pistoia, which was then occupied by the Whites.

thou art sprung<sup>1</sup>. Throughout the dark Circles of Hell no spirit did I see so defiant toward God; no, not even him who was flung down from the walls of Thebes<sup>2</sup>. He took to flight, nor spake a word more; and I beheld a Centaur approaching full of fury, who shouted: 'Where, where is the malefactor?' The Maremma, I ween, hath not so many snakes as he had on his hindquarters, up to the point where the human form begins. On his shoulders at the back of the neck a dragon lay with wings outspread, which sets on fire whatsoever it meets. 'He,' my Master said, 'is Cacus, who beneath the rock on the Aventine Hill oftentimes created a pool of blood. He follows not the same track with his brethren<sup>3</sup>, by reason of his fraudulent theft of the mighty drove of oxen which was in his neighbourhood<sup>4</sup>; from which cause his wily deeds came to an end beneath the club of Hercules, who haply gave him a hundred blows therewith, though he felt not even ten<sup>5</sup>.'

A serpent  
and a man  
blended into  
one form.

While he thus spake the other hastened by, and three spirits<sup>6</sup> came on beneath us, of whose presence neither I nor my Leader was ware, until they exclaimed: 'Who are ye?' whereupon our discourse ceased, and after that we gave heed to them alone. I recognized them not; but it came to pass

<sup>1</sup> It was believed that Pistoia was founded by the remains of Catiline's army.

<sup>2</sup> Capaneus; *Inf.* xiv. 46.

<sup>3</sup> The other Centaurs in the Circle of the violent, *Inf.* xii. 55 foll. The idea that Cacus was a Centaur was, however, an error on Dante's part.

<sup>4</sup> Cacus stole the cattle of Hercules; *Virg. Aen.* viii. 193 foll.

<sup>5</sup> Because he was dead first.

<sup>6</sup> These are three Florentine thieves, Agnello Brunelleschi, Buoso degli Abati, and Puccio Sciancato. Cianfa, who is mentioned immediately below, was one of the Donati family, and a housebreaker; he appears as the serpent with six feet.



—as by some accident a thing doth happen—that one had occasion to name another, when he said: ‘Where hath Cianfa remained behind?’ Accordingly, that my Leader might give attention, from my chin upward to my nose I laid my finger. Reader, if now thou art slow to believe what I tell thee, ’twill be no marvel, for I who saw it hardly admit its truth. While I was keeping mine eyes intent on them, lo! a serpent with six feet darted in front of one of them, and attached itself completely to him. It infolded his paunch with its middle feet, and caught his arms with those in front; then in either cheek it fixed its teeth. The hinder feet it extended to his thighs, and between these it passed its tail, stretching it upward behind over the loins. Never was ivy attached so closely to a tree, as round the other’s limbs the dire monster twined its own. Thereafter they adhered, together, as if they had been warm wax, and mingled their colours, neither whereof now retained its former appearance; like as, when paper burns, there spreads over it in front of the flame a brown hue, which is not yet black, though the white tint is disappearing. The other two were looking on, and both exclaimed: ‘Ah me, Agnello, how thou art changing! behold, now thou art neither two nor one.’ Already had the two heads become one, when we perceived two countenances combined to form a single face, wherein the two were lost. The arms from being four strips of flesh became two; the thighs and legs, the belly and the chest, took the form of limbs such as never before were seen. Every original feature was there effaced: the unnatural figure appeared to be both, yet neither of the two, and in such guise with tardy steps it went its way.

Even as a lizard, when beneath the great heat of the dog-  
days it shifts from hedge to hedge, seems a lightning flash, if

A serpent  
and a man

interchange  
forms.

it crosses the road: such, as it came on against the other two, toward their belly, did a small infuriated serpent<sup>1</sup> appear, which was livid and black as is a peppercorn. And one of them<sup>2</sup> it pierced at that part whereby our nutriment is first received<sup>3</sup>, and then falling down it extended itself in front of him. The spirit thus pierced gazed at him, yet spake no word; but halted and yawned, as if attacked by drowsiness or fever. His eyes were fixed on the serpent, and the serpent's on him; the one from his wound, the other from his mouth, emitted a strong jet of smoke, and these two came in contact. Now let Lucan be mute, nor tell the tale of the ill-fated Sabellus and Nassidius<sup>4</sup>, but give ear to that which is about to be disclosed. Let Ovid be mute concerning Cadmus and Arethusa<sup>5</sup>; for if in his poetry he changes him into a serpent and her into a fountain, I envy him not: for never did he transform two natures face to face in such wise, that both the persons were able to change their substance. They corresponded one to other in such fashion, that the serpent cleft its tail forkwise, and the wounded spirit drew his feet together into one. His legs, thighs and all, adhered so closely to each other, that presently the joining left no visible trace. The form that there was lost the serpent's forked tail assumed, and its skin became soft, and that of the other hard. I saw his arms close in at the armpits, and in proportion as they shrank, the monster's two feet, which were short, lengthen out. Thereafter its hind feet, twisted

<sup>1</sup> This, as we learn at the end of the Canto, is Francesco Guercio de' Cavalcanti.

<sup>2</sup> Buoso degli Abati.

<sup>3</sup> The navel.

<sup>4</sup> Two soldiers in Cato's army who died from the bites of serpents in Libya; Lucan, *Phars.* ix. 761 foll.

<sup>5</sup> The change of Cadmus into a snake is described in Ovid, *Mét.* iv. 563 foll.; that of Arethusa into a fountain in v. 572 foll.

together, became the member which man conceals, and from his own the poor wretch had put forth two such feet. While the smoke was vesting both of them with an unwonted hue, and causing the hair to grow on the surface of the one figure, and removing it from the other, that one rose up, and this one fell to earth; yet for all that they withdrew not from each other their baleful eyes, through the influence of which they were interchanging their muzzles. He that was standing drew his in the direction of the temples, and through the excess of matter which came thitherward the ears issued from the flat cheeks; then, the matter which did not run backward, but stayed, formed with that superfluity a nose for the face, and enlarged the lips to their befitting size. He that was on the ground protrudes his muzzle, and draws back his ears within his head, as the snail doth its horns; and his tongue, which ere this was undivided and prompt to speak, cleaves in twain, while the forked tongue of the other closes up, and the smoke ceases. The spirit that had been changed into a monster fled hissing along the valley, and the other followed him sputtering as he spake. Anon he turned on him his newly assumed back, and said to the other<sup>1</sup>: 'I will that Buoso run, as I have done, on all fours along this path.'

Thus did I see the seventh vile gang change to and fro; and here let its strangeness be my excuse, if my pen be somewhat at fault. And albeit mine eyes were a whit confused, and my mind bewildered, they could not escape so secretly, that I should fail clearly to recognize Puccio Sciancato; and he was the one who, alone of the three companions that came at the first, had undergone no change:

<sup>1</sup> Guercio turned his back on Buoso, and said to Puccio, &c.

the other was he by reason of whom, Gaville, thou dost mourn<sup>1</sup>.

## CANTO XXVI. MALEBOLGE; THE EIGHTH *BOLGIA*

The  
ignominy  
of Florence.

Florence, rejoice, in that thou art so great, that thou wavest thy wings over land and sea, and through Hell thy name is widely known. Among the robbers five of thy citizens, men of such rank, I found, whereby I am humiliated, and thou dost rise to no high honour. But if at the approach of morn dreams are true<sup>2</sup>, within no long time thou wilt be aware of that which Prato<sup>3</sup>, not to say others, covets for thee. And had it come already it were not too soon. O that it had, since come in sooth it must, for it will lie heavier upon me, the more I advance in years. We departed thence; and over the stairs, which the juts of rock had made for us to descend before, my Master mounted again, drawing me after him: and as we followed the solitary way between the crags and the blocks of the line of rock<sup>4</sup>, without the help of the hands the feet made no progress.

<sup>1</sup> Guercio was killed by some people of Gaville in the upper Valdarno, and in consequence of this his relations slew many of the inhabitants of that place.

<sup>2</sup> Dante apparently means that coming events are now casting their shadows before them; the signs of the times point that way. He anticipates misfortunes as about to fall on Florence as a judgement for the immorality of her citizens.

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the reason why Prato in particular is here mentioned among the enemies of Florence is, that shortly before this time Florence had been laid under an interdict by Cardinal Niccolò da Prato, in consequence of the failure of the mission on which he had been sent thither by Benedict XI.

<sup>4</sup> The line which crosses the embankments and forms the bridges.



At that time I grieved, and now my grief is renewed, whensoever I reflect on what I then beheld; and I curb my genius more than is my wont, that it may not go astray from virtue's guidance; so that, if a favouring star, or a Higher Power, hath vouchsafed to me that good gift, I may not cause myself to forfeit it<sup>1</sup>. Many as are the fireflies which, in the season when he who illuminates the world keeps his face least hidden from us<sup>2</sup>, what time the fly gives place to the gnat<sup>3</sup>, the rustic reposing on the hillside sees beneath him in the valley—there haply where he gathers his grapes or ploughs the fields; so many were the flames wherewith from side to side the eighth trench glittered, as I was ware so soon as I reached a point where the bottom was visible. And even as he who avenged him by the bears<sup>4</sup> beheld Elijah's chariot departing, when the horses rose aloft to heaven; for his eyes as they followed it failed to see aught else than the flame alone, ascending on high like a tiny cloud: in such wise did each move along the hollow of the defile, for none of them gives token of what it conceals, and every flame keeps a sinner in hiding.

The eighth  
*bolgia*,  
of the  
fraudulent  
counsellors;  
the en-  
veloping  
flames.

I was standing on the bridge uprisen to look, so that, had I not clutched a block of stone, without any to push me I should have fallen below; and my Leader, seeing me thus absorbed, said: 'The spirits are within the flames; each of them is wrapped in that wherewith he is on fire.' 'My Master,' I replied, 'through hearing thee I am more assured,

Ulysses and  
Diomede.

<sup>1</sup> In this *bolgia* Dante sees conspicuous instances of the punishment of men of great ability; from these he draws the moral for his own guidance.

<sup>2</sup> In the summer season.

<sup>3</sup> In the late evening.

<sup>4</sup> Elisha, who caused the bears to tear the children who mocked him;

2 Kings ii. 23, 24.

but ere that I opined that such was the case, and already I was desirous to ask thee: Who is within that flame, which draws nigh with its point so parted, that it might seem to be rising from the pyre whereon Eteocles and his brother were laid<sup>1</sup>?' He replied to me: 'Within there Ulysses and Diomedes are tormented; and they go in company to meet their punishment, as they did to vent their fury<sup>2</sup>; and within their flame is expiated the ambush of the horse, which opened the gate whence the noble stock of the Romans proceeded<sup>3</sup>. There the stratagem is avenged, by reason of which Deidamia, though dead, still laments for Achilles<sup>4</sup>; there too the penalty of the Palladium<sup>5</sup> is borne.' 'If within that blazing fire they can speak,' said I, 'with all my heart, Master, I pray thee once and again, so that my prayer may have the force of a thousand prayers, not to refuse to wait till the horned flame comes hither; thou seest how in my longing I reach out towards it.' And he to me: 'Praiseworthy indeed is thy request, and therefore I approve it; but see thou keep thy tongue in check. Leave it to me to speak, inasmuch as I comprehend thy wish; for haply, since they were Greeks, they would be shy of thine address.'

<sup>1</sup> When the bodies of the twin brothers, Eteocles and Polynices, who killed one another in single combat, were placed on the same pyre, they refused to commingle their ashes, so that two separate flames went up from them.

<sup>2</sup> Their deeds of violence during the capture of Troy are referred to.

<sup>3</sup> The stratagem of the wooden horse caused the capture of Troy, the result of which was the departure of Aeneas for Italy, and the foundation of the Roman state.

<sup>4</sup> Ulysses and Diomedes artfully persuaded Achilles to leave Scyros and take part in the Trojan war; and in consequence of this Deidamia, the daughter of the king of Scyros, who was in love with him, died of grief.

<sup>5</sup> The tutelary statue of Athena, which was carried off by them.

So soon as the flame had reached the spot, where my Leader deemed the time and place to be suitable, in the following terms I heard him speak: 'Ye two who are within a single flame, if in my lifetime I merited aught from you, if what I merited from you was much or little, when in the world I wrote my sublime poem<sup>1</sup>, stay your steps, and let one of you declare, where, after having lost his way, he went to meet his death.' The larger horn of that ancient flame<sup>2</sup> began to wave itself with a murmuring sound, like a flame that is vexed by the wind. Anon, swaying its extremity to and fro, as if it were the tongue which spake, it emitted a voice and said: 'When I quitted Circe, who for a year and more kept me in seclusion near Gaeta, before Aeneas so named the spot<sup>3</sup>, neither my fondness for my son, nor my aged sire's distress, nor the affection due which should have rejoiced Penelope's heart, availed to overpower within me my eagerness to win experience of the world, and of the virtues and vices of mankind; but I started on the expanse of the deep sea with a single vessel, and with that small company who had not deserted me. Both coasts I saw as far as Spain and Morocco, and I saw the Sardinians' isle, and the others whose shores are laved by that sea. I and my companions were old and weary, when we reached the narrow strait where Hercules set up his boundary-marks<sup>4</sup>, to the end that no man should proceed beyond; on my right hand I left Seville behind, and on the opposite side Ceuta had already receded from my view. "O brothers," I cried, "ye who through dangers innumerable have reached the west, grudge

The story  
of Ulysses'  
death.

<sup>1</sup> The *Aeneid*, in which he had commemorated them.

<sup>2</sup> Ulysses.

<sup>3</sup> After Caieta, his nurse; Virg. *Aen.* vii. 1-4.

<sup>4</sup> The Pillars of Hercules, Calpe and Abyla.

not to the too brief waking-time of our senses which still remains, to win, by following in the sun's wake, the knowledge of the uninhabited world. Bethink you of your origin; ye were not created to live the life of brutes, but to pursue virtue and intelligence." By this brief address I made my companions so eager for the voyage, that hardly after that could I have restrained them; and turning our stern toward the morn we sped our mad flight with oars for wings, ever trending more and more to the left hand<sup>1</sup>. Already did the eye of night behold all the stars of the other pole, and our pole so low that it rose not above the sea level. Five times was the light kindled, and as often quenched, on the under side of the moon since the commencement of our perilous passage, when there met our view a mountain<sup>2</sup> dim by reason of the distance, the like of which in height methought I had never seen. Joy filled our hearts, but soon it was turned to mourning, for from the newly discovered land a whirlwind arose, which smote the forepart of the vessel. Thrice with a rush of waters it whirled it round; at the fourth onset the stern was raised on high and the prow sank beneath, as a Higher Power willed, until the sea closed over us.'

## CANTO XXVII. MALEBOLGE; THE EIGHTH *BOLGIA*

Guido da  
Monte-  
feliro.

The flame was now erect and still, its address being concluded, and was departing from us with the beloved Poet's permission, when another that followed behind attracted our

<sup>1</sup> The two statements here imply that their course lay south-westward.

<sup>2</sup> The Mountain of Purgatory is probably meant, which was regarded by Dante as rising from the ocean at a point antipodal to Jerusalem.



eyes towards its tip by a confused sound which proceeded therefrom. As the Sicilian bull<sup>1</sup>—whose first roar arose (and justly too) from the anguish of him who had shaped it with his file—bellowed with the sufferer's voice, so that, for all it was of bronze, it seemed notwithstanding to be agonized with pain: similarly, from having no passage or vent, the woful words were converted by the element of fire into its language<sup>2</sup>. But after they had made their way upward through the point of the flame, imparting to it that vibration, which the tongue had given them in their passage through the mouth, we heard as follows: 'O thou, toward whom I direct my voice, and who wast speaking but now the Lombard tongue, when thou saidst: "Now go thy way, I urge thee no more to speak"<sup>3</sup>: let it not vex thee, because I have perchance arrived somewhat late, to stop and speak with me: thou seest that it vexes not me, though I am burning. If thou hast recently fallen into this blind world from the sweet land of Italy, which is the origin of all my sin, tell me whether in the Romagna<sup>4</sup> there is peace or war; for I came from the mountains between Urbino and the chain whence the Tiber issues<sup>5</sup>.'

<sup>1</sup> The brazen bull made by Perillus for Phalaris, tyrant of Agrigentum in Sicily, in which the human victim could be burnt, so that his cries resembled the bellowing of a bull. Perillus was the first victim who met this fate.

<sup>2</sup> i. e. into a rushing sound.

<sup>3</sup> Virgil is spoken of above as having dismissed Ulysses; as a native of Mantua he is supposed to use the Lombard dialect.

<sup>4</sup> Romagna was the country between the Po and the Apennines in one direction, and Bologna and the Adriatic in the other.

<sup>5</sup> The speaker is Guido da Montefeltro, the leader of the Ghibellines in Romagna, and one of the ablest military commanders of his time. Montefeltro was a mountainous district on the northern side of the Apennines towards Urbino.

He inquires  
about the  
Romagna.

I was already bending down to listen, when my Leader touched my side and said: 'Be it thy part to speak, this one is an Italian.' And I, who ere this was ready with my reply, delayed not, but thus began: 'Thou spirit that art in concealment below, thy Romagna is not, nor ever was, free from feuds in its tyrants' hearts, but open war there was none when I departed. Ravenna is as for many years it hath been; there the eagle of Polenta doth brood, so that it covers Cervia with its wings<sup>1</sup>. The city which erewhile endured the long siege, and raised a bloody heap of the French corpses, abides beneath the lordship of the green paws<sup>2</sup>. The old and the young mastiff of Verrucchio, who disposed ill of Montagna, make augers of their teeth where such is their wont<sup>3</sup>. The cities on the Lamone and the Santerno are ruled by the lion's cub on the white field<sup>4</sup>, who between summer and winter changes sides<sup>5</sup>; and that town whose flank the Savio laves<sup>6</sup>, even as it lies between the plain and the mountains, lives between tyranny and free estate. Now I beseech thee to tell us who thou art; be not less compliant than other spirits have been, so may thy name maintain itself in the world above.'

<sup>1</sup> The counts of Polenta, whose arms were an eagle, were now lords of Ravenna. Cervia was a town on the coast south of Ravenna.

<sup>2</sup> Forlì in 1282 endured a long siege by the French troops sent against it by Pope Martin IV, until they were defeated by Guido da Montefeltro. A green lion was the arms of the Ordellaffi, who were lords of Forlì in 1300.

<sup>3</sup> Malatesta da Verrucchio and his son Malatestino were tyrannical lords of Rimini. Montagna de' Parcitati, a Ghibelline chieftain, was murdered in prison by Malatestino.

<sup>4</sup> Faenza on the Lamone and Imola on the Santerno were governed by Maghinardo Pagani, whose arms were a lion azure on a white field.

<sup>5</sup> This means that he was a Guelf in Tuscany and a Ghibelline in Romagna.

<sup>6</sup> Cesena.

When the flame after its manner had roared awhile, it moved its sharp point hither and thither, and finally breathed forth the following words: 'Did I conceive that the person to whom mine answer was addressed would ever return to the world, this flame should stand still nor vibrate more; but whereas from this depth, if what I hear is true, no one hath ever returned alive, without fear of infamy I reply to thee. A man of arms I was, and thereafter I became a Franciscan, thinking by wearing the cord to make amends; and verily my purpose would have been fulfilled, had it not been for the High Priest<sup>1</sup>—may ruin seize him!—who brought me back to my former sins; and how this befell, and why, I would have thee hear. While I was the spirit that quickened the flesh and bones which I received from my mother, my deeds were not those of the lion, but of the fox. Shrewd plans and underhand ways I knew them all; and so skilfully did I practise them, that to the ends of the earth the fame thereof went forth. When I found that I had reached the stage of my life, at which every one should lower his sails and take in the shrouds, that which before was my pleasure gave me pain, and after repentance and confession I became a monk; ah woe is me! that would have been my deliverance. It was the leader of the modern Pharisees, who, when waging war, not with Saracens or Jews, but hard by the Lateran<sup>2</sup>—for all his foes were Christians, nor had any of them been engaged in conquering Acre<sup>3</sup>, or trafficking in the Soldan's territories<sup>4</sup>—neither regarded in his own person his supreme

His sin, and what befel him after death.

<sup>1</sup> Pope Boniface VIII; he is called 'the leader of the modern Pharisees' below.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. with the Colonna family, who dwelt near St. John Lateran.

<sup>3</sup> Acre was captured by the Saracens in 1291.

<sup>4</sup> This traffic was now confined to the Jews.

office or his Holy Orders, nor in me the cord which was wont to emaciate its wearers. But, as Constantine sought out Sylvester in the recesses of Soracte to cure him of his leprosy, so did he seek out me as his director to cure him of his fever of pride<sup>1</sup>, asking counsel of me, the while I held my peace, for his words appeared intemperate. Thereafter he said: "Let not thy heart misgive thee; from this time forth I absolve thee, and do thou instruct me how to overthrow Palestrina<sup>2</sup>. 'Tis mine, thou knowest, both to lock and to unlock heaven, for which reason the keys, which my predecessor valued little<sup>3</sup>, are two in number." Then by his weighty arguments was I driven to the conclusion that to hold my peace was the worse counsel, and I said: "Father, since thou dost absolve me from the sin into which I am now about to fall—by promising much and fulfilling little thou wilt triumph on thy lofty throne." Anon, when I was dead, Francis came in quest of me; but one of the black Cherubim said to him: "Forbear to take him; do me no wrong. It is his lot to descend among my minions, because of the fraudulent counsel which he gave; from which time until now I have been in waiting to seize him; for he that doth not repent cannot be absolved, and repentance cannot coexist with the desire to commit the sin, by reason of the contradiction which doth not admit thereof." O wretched me, how I shuddered when he clutched me, saying: "Maybe thou

The story was that, when Constantine was suffering from a leprosy, he was recovered from it by Pope Sylvester in his retreat in a cave on Mount Soracte. Similarly Guido was in retirement in the Franciscan convent at Assisi, when Boniface applied to him.

<sup>2</sup> This was at this time a fortress of the Colonna. It was afterwards surrendered by them under promise of an amnesty, whereupon Boniface razed it to the ground.

<sup>3</sup> The reference is to Celestine the Fifth's abdication.



didst not bethink thee that I was a logician ! ” Unto Minos he bore me ; and he wound his tail eight times round his rugged back, and after biting it in excess of fury exclaimed : “ This one is condemned to the thievish <sup>1</sup> flame.” Hence it is, that this place which thou seest is the scene of my doom, and that in this garb I walk in misery.’ His tale being thus concluded, the flame departed with sounds of woe, writhing and agitating its pointed horn. We passed onward, my Leader and I, over the line of rock as far as the next bridge, which spans the dike wherein the penalty is paid by those, who by sowing discord lay a burden on themselves.

## CANTO XXVIII. MALEBOLGE; THE NINTH *BOLGIA*

Who, who could fully describe even with untrammelled words <sup>2</sup> the blood and the wounds which now I saw, though he ofttimes rehearsed the tale <sup>3</sup> ? Assuredly every tongue would fall short of the task, by reason of our speech and our intellect, the capacity whereof is all too small to embrace so wide a field. If all the folk were reassembled, who erst in Apulia, that fateful land, bewailed their blood <sup>4</sup>, which was shed both by the Trojans <sup>5</sup>, and during the protracted war,

The ninth *bolgia*, of the propagators of discord.

<sup>1</sup> i. e. which hides its prey.

<sup>2</sup> In prose.

<sup>3</sup> The ninth *bolgia* contains the schismatics and propagators of discord, who are gashed with a sword by a devil, in recompense for their having caused disunion among mankind.

<sup>4</sup> Dante proceeds to say, that the carnage which he beheld here exceeded the sum of all the blood shed in southern Italy (Apulia) on five occasions which were famous in history.

<sup>5</sup> Under Aeneas.

wherein the spoil of the rings was heaped so high, as Livy's truthful pen records<sup>1</sup>: and those withal who suffered from their wounds because they made head against Robert Guiscard<sup>2</sup>; and the other folk, whose bones are still piled at Ceperano, where the Apulians to a man were faithless<sup>3</sup>, and at Tagliacozzo, where without arms old Erard won the day<sup>4</sup>: and if some of these victims showed how their limbs were pierced, others how they were cut off, that would be nothing to compare with the noxious sight of the ninth trench.

Mahomet.

Never from the loss of centre-piece or side-piece was cask so rifted, as one whom I saw cleft from his chin down to the passage of the wind: between his legs his entrails depended; the vitals were exposed to view, and—gruesome sight!—the pouch where that which is swallowed is converted into ordure. While mine eyes were completely fastened on him, he regarded me, and opened his breast with his hands, saying: 'See now how I rend myself; see how mutilated is Mahomet. In front of me Ali<sup>5</sup> goes on his way lamenting, with his visage cleft from the chin to the forelock; and all

<sup>1</sup> In the second Punic war, including the battle of Cannae.

<sup>2</sup> The Greeks and Saracens, who were slain by the Normans under Robert Guiscard in the eleventh century.

<sup>3</sup> The Apulians were to have defended Ceperano on the Liris against Charles of Anjou, but deserted their post. The battle and massacre, however, which are here referred to, took place, not at Ceperano but at Benevento, where Manfred was defeated in 1266.

<sup>4</sup> At Tagliacozzo Conradin, Manfred's nephew, was defeated by Charles of Anjou, whose success on this occasion was due to the advice of Erard de Valéry.

<sup>5</sup> The two great Mahometan sects, the Shiites and the Sunnites, are divided on the question whether Ali was or was not the rightful successor to Mahomet in the Caliphate. Hence Ali is regarded as a source of schism.

the rest whom thou beholdest here were in their lifetime sowers of dissension and schism, and for this cause are they thus rent. In our rear there is a devil who thus cruelly disfigures us, putting anew to the sword's edge each member of this gang, when we have made the circuit of the dolorous road, since the wounds close up again ere any of us reappears in his presence. But who art thou that musest on the rock-bridge, maybe to delay thy entering on the punishment which is ordained for the crimes thou hast confessed?' 'Death hath not yet overtaken him,' my Master replied, 'nor doth guilt conduct him to torment; but, that he may be equipped with full experience, I who am dead am appointed to guide him here below from Circle to Circle of Hell: and this is as true as that I speak to thee.' On hearing these words a hundred spirits and more halted in the dike to gaze at me, forgetting their agony in their wonderment. 'Do thou then, who haply wilt ere long behold the sun, bear word to Fra Dolcino, that, if he desires not to follow me hither speedily, he should so provision himself, that a deep snow-fall may not procure the victory for Novara's sons, which otherwise it would be no easy task to win<sup>1</sup>.' These words did Mahomet address to me, after lifting one foot with a view to starting; at their conclusion he set it on the ground to depart.

Another, whose throat was pierced, and his nose cut off up to the eyebrows, and who had but one ear, having halted together with the others to gaze in wonder, in front of his

Pier da  
Medicina.

<sup>1</sup> Fra Dolcino was the leader of a sect of fanatical religious reformers at the end of the thirteenth century. When Clement V in 1305 issued a Bull for the extirpation of the sect, he and his followers withdrew to the hills between Novara and Vercelli, where they occupied a strong position; but they were ultimately forced to surrender owing to failure of provisions and a great fall of snow.

company opened his windpipe, which outwardly was blood-stained on either side, and said: 'Thou, who art not condemned for any crime, and whom, if a strange likeness deceive me not, I have seen above in the land of Italy, bethink thee of Pier da Medicina<sup>1</sup>, if ever thou revisitest the fair plain which from Vercelli slopes downward to Marcabò<sup>2</sup>: and intimate to the two best citizens of Fano, Messer Guido and Angiolello, that, if our power of foresight here is not delusive, they shall be cast forth from their vessel, tied in a sack, near La Cattolica, through a fell tyrant's treachery<sup>3</sup>. From the isle of Cyprus to Majorca<sup>4</sup> never did Neptune see so dire an outrage committed by pirates or by Argive folk<sup>5</sup>. The traitor who sees with but one eye<sup>6</sup>, and possesses the city which one in my company here would be glad never to have beheld<sup>7</sup>, will induce them to come to parley with him; anon he will bring it to pass that neither vows nor prayers against the wind of Focara will be needed for them<sup>8</sup>.'

Curio.

And I to him: 'If thou desirest that I should bear news of thee to the world above, point out to me and explain who he is, to whom the sight he saw is painful.' Then laid he

<sup>1</sup> He kept alive the strife between the families of Polenta and Malatesta. Thus, like the other persons who are now introduced, he is an example of promoters of political discord.

<sup>2</sup> The plain of Lombardy, towards the head of which Vercelli lies, while Marcabò is situated near the mouths of the Po.

<sup>3</sup> They were invited by Malatestino of Rimini to a conference at the coast-town of La Cattolica, and were caused by him to be drowned by the sailors on their way thither.

<sup>4</sup> I. e. throughout the Mediterranean.

<sup>5</sup> The early Greek settlers in Italy were regarded as brigands.

<sup>6</sup> Malatestino.

<sup>7</sup> Rimini; this is explained below.

<sup>8</sup> They would be drowned before reaching the headland of Focara near La Cattolica, which was dangerous owing to its storms.



his hand on the jaw of one of his companions, and opened his mouth, crying: 'This is he, but he doth not speak. This man, being banished, extinguished the doubt in Caesar's mind, by affirming that he who is prepared doth ever lose if he endures to wait.' Ah! how scared did he appear to me, his tongue being severed within his throat—that Curio<sup>1</sup>, who was so bold in speech!

Then one who had both his hands cut off, uplifting the stumps in the dusky air, so that the blood befouled his face, exclaimed: 'Bethink thee of Mosca too—of me, who said, alas! "A deed once done hath an end"; which words were to the Tuscan folk a seed of ill<sup>2</sup>.' 'And it was death withal to thy race,' I subjoined; whereat he, accumulating grief on grief, departed like a distraught and anguished soul.

But I remained to watch the troop, and I beheld a thing, which on my own authority without further evidence I should fear to narrate, were it not that my conscience emboldens me, that trusty companion which inspires a man with confidence beneath the breastplate of the sense of right. In sooth I saw—and even now I seem to see it—a headless body walking, like the others of that gloomy band; and by the hair he was holding the severed head suspended in his hand like a lantern,

<sup>1</sup> Lucan, whom Dante is here following, says that after Caesar had crossed the Rubicon he was joined at Ariminum (Rimini) by Curio, who urged him to advance, saying, 'Tolle moras; semper nocuit differre paratis.'

<sup>2</sup> The story is this. Buondelmonte, a young Florentine nobleman, was betrothed to a lady of the Amidei family, but married instead a daughter of the Donati. When the Amidei were consulting how they could best avenge themselves for this insult, Mosca Lamberti used the words here mentioned, by which he meant, 'Death settles a matter once for all,' and accordingly Buondelmonte was murdered. The ultimate result of this was that the Buondelmonti took the lead of the Guelph, the Amidei of the Ghibelline faction in Florence.

and it gazed at us, and said : ‘ Oh me ! ’ He used himself as a light to guide him, and they were two in one, and one in two : how that can be, He knows who ordains it so. When he was just at the foot of the bridge, he lifted his arm on high, holding the head, so as to bring nearer to us his words, which were as follows : ‘ Behold now my direful punishment, thou who still breathing goest thy way to view the dead ; consider whether any other doom is like unto this : and that thou mayst bear tidings of me, know that I am Bertrand de Born, the man who gave the Young King the wrongful encouragement <sup>1</sup>. Between father and son I excited enmity ; Ahithophel <sup>2</sup> did not more so between Absalom and David by his malignant incentives. Because I severed persons so closely united, I bear my brain severed alas ! from its origin in this trunk. Thus in my case is the law of retaliation observed.’

## CANTO XXIX. MALEBOLGE ; THE TENTH *BOLGIA*

Geri del  
Bello.

The multitude of folk and their manifold wounds had so inebriated mine eyes that they longed to pause and weep ; but Virgil said to me : ‘ Why art thou absorbed in gazing ? why are thy looks wholly riveted on the sad mutilated shades below ? This hath not been thy wont in the other trenches. Bethink thee, if thou mindest to tell their number, that the circuit of the valley is two and twenty miles ; and

<sup>1</sup> He supported the younger Henry, eldest son of Henry II of England, against his father. The younger Henry was called ‘ the Young King ’ because he was crowned during his father’s lifetime.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Sam. xv. 12 foll.

already the moon is beneath our feet : the time allotted to us is now brief, and there is more to see beyond what thou beholdest.' Thereupon I answered : 'Hadst thou given heed to the reason of my looking, maybe thou wouldst have vouchsafed me a still longer stay.' Meanwhile my Leader went his way, and I was following him even while I thus replied ; anon I added : 'Within that hollow place, whereon but now mine eyes were fixed so attentively, methinks a spirit of my race is lamenting the sin, for which in those depths so dire a penalty is paid.' Then said my Master : 'Trouble not thyself henceforth about him ; give heed to other things, and let him be : for from the foot of the bridge I saw him point at thee, and threaten violently with his finger ; and Geri del Bello<sup>1</sup> I heard him named. Thou at that moment wast so wholly engrossed with him who ere-while held Altaforte<sup>2</sup>, that thou didst not look that way ; so he passed on.' 'O Leader mine,' I said, 'it was his violent death, which is not yet avenged by any that is affected by the indignity, that made him contemptuous ; this in my judgement was the reason why he departed without speaking to me ; and by so doing hath he made me more compassionate toward him.'

Conversing thus we reached the first point, where from the ridge the next valley, were there more light there, would be revealed to its lowest depths. When we were above the last cloister of Malebolge, so that its lay-brethren were visible to our sight, I was assailed by weird lamentations, armed, like darts, with pangs of compassion, whereupon I shielded mine ears with my hands. Like as the suffering

The tenth  
*bolgia*,  
of the  
falsifiers.

<sup>1</sup> A relation of Dante and a turbulent person ; he was murdered by one of the Sacchetti family.

<sup>2</sup> Hautefort, the name of Bertrand de Born's castle.

would be, if the diseases of the hospitals of Valdichiana<sup>1</sup> from July to September, and those of the Maremma and Sardinia, were all accumulated in one dike, such was the suffering here; and the stench which proceeded therefrom was such as is wont to arise from festering limbs. From the long bridge we descended on to the last embankment, keeping constantly to the left, and then my sight had more power to penetrate to the bottom, where the minister of the Most High, justice infallible, punishes the falsifiers whom it here assigns. Not more dismal, I ween, was the sight of the whole people of Aegina smitten with sickness—when so baleful was the air, that the animals, even to the tiniest worm, all fell dead, whereupon the ancient folk, as the poets affirm, were renewed from the seed of ants<sup>2</sup>—than was the sight in that darksome vale of the spirits pining here and there in heaps. One on another's belly, one on another's back, they lay; others on all fours shifted their place along the dreary road. Step by step we proceeded without uttering a word, watching and listening to the sick folk, who were powerless to raise their persons.

Their  
loathsome  
punishment.

Two of them I saw seated, leaning one against the other, even as platter in heating leans against platter, and spotted with scabs from head to foot: nor ever saw I groom for whom his master is waiting, or who is kept awake against his will, use a curry-comb so hastily, as each of these scratched with his nails the surface of his skin, by reason of the furious itching, which defies relief. And as a knife doth scrape a bream, or other fish with larger scales, so did the nails peel off the scabs. 'O thou who with thy fingers

<sup>1</sup> The valley of the Chiana in Tuscany, which was an unhealthy district.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Ovid, *Met.* vii. 523 foll.



dost flay thyself'—thus spake my Leader unto one of the two—'and ever and anon makest them serve for pincers, tell us whether among those confined within this place there be any of Italian birth—so for thy present employment may thy nails suffice thee everlastingly.' 'Italians we are both of us, whom thou seest here thus mangled,' that spirit replied with tears; 'but who art thou, that hast inquired of us?' And my Leader said: 'My office is to descend with this one, who is alive, downward from terrace to terrace, and my purpose is to show him Hell.' Thereat they ceased their mutual support, and both of them turned toward me trembling, with others who heard his announcement indirectly. Then the kind Master gave me all his attention, saying: 'Tell them thy desire'; and, since such was his pleasure, I thus began: 'So may the memory of you not disappear from men's minds in the world of the living, but endure for many courses of the sun—tell me who ye are and of what folk; let not your foul and loathsome punishment deter you from revealing yourselves to me.'

'Of Arezzo I was,' one of them <sup>1</sup> replied, 'and Albero of Griffolino and Capocchio the alchemists. Siena consigned me to the flames; but the cause of my death was not that which brings me hither. True it is that I told him, though in jest, that I could lift myself on wings through the air; and he, who along with curiosity had scant intellect, desired me to show him the device; and solely because I made him not a Daedalus <sup>2</sup>, he caused me to be burnt by one who regarded him as his son. But 'twas for alchemy which I practised in the world, that Minos the infallible condemned me to the last of the ten trenches.' And to the Poet I said: 'Now was ever folk so frivolous as the Sienese? Verily the French fall far short of them.' Whereupon the other leprous

<sup>1</sup> His name was Griffolino.

<sup>2</sup> i. e. did not teach him to fly.

spirit who heard me replied to my remark: 'Prithee<sup>1</sup> except Stricca, who was wont to make such modest outlays; and Niccolò, who first invented the expensive use of cloves in the garden where such seeds germinate; except too the club, wherein Caccia d'Asciano squandered his vineyards and wide forest-lands, and Abbagliato displayed his wit. But that thou mayst know who it is who thus supports thee in condemning the Sienese, regard me keenly, so that my face may answer aright thy question: and thou wilt see that I am Capocchio's shade, who falsified metals by alchemy; and thou shouldst remember, if I read thy features aright, that I was a good mimic of nature.'

## CANTO XXX. MALEBOLGE; THE TENTH *BOLGIA*

Counter-  
feiters of  
others'  
persons;  
Gianni  
Schicchi;  
Myrrha.

What time Juno was enraged on Semele's account against the Theban race, as once and again she showed, Athamas<sup>2</sup> was seized with madness so great, that, seeing his wife walking with the burden of her two sons on either hand, he cried: 'Let us spread the nets, so that at the passage I may catch the lioness and her whelps'; anon he put forth his merciless clutches, grasping one of them, Learchus by name, and whirled him round, and dashed him against a stone, while with her other charge she drowned herself. And when fortune brought low the 'Trojans' overweening pride, so

<sup>1</sup> What follows is ironical, the persons mentioned being extravagant Sienese. The 'club' was the Prodigal Club of Siena.

<sup>2</sup> Athamas of Thebes and Hecuba of Troy are here introduced as instances of violent insanity, to illustrate the madness with which two counterfeiters of others' persons are afflicted.

that their king and his kingdom withal were ruined, sad Hecuba, in her misery and captivity, when she had beheld Polyxena's corpse, and on the seashore sorrowfully recognized her Polidorus, barked madly like a dog; so greatly was her mind distraught by her woe. But never were so cruel bursts of frenzy seen afflicting a soul at Thebes or Troy, or goading either beasts or human limbs, as what I saw in two pale and naked shades, which ran hither and thither biting the others, as doth the hog when let out from the sty. One of them fell upon Capocchio, and gripped him so fast by the nape of the neck, that as he dragged him he scraped his belly along the hard ground. And he of Arezzo<sup>1</sup>, who remained behind trembling, said to me: 'That sprite is Gianni Schicchi, and in this wise harrying others he pursues his mad career.' 'Oh,' I replied—'so may not the other spirit gore with its teeth thy back—be not loth to tell us who it is, ere it darts off from here.' And he to me: 'That is the ancient spirit of Myrrha, the abandoned one, who loved her father with other than rightful love. By counterfeiting another's person she accomplished her sin with him, even as the other who goes his way yonder, in order to win the queen of the herd persevered in counterfeiting Buoso Donati<sup>2</sup>, and dictated a will, and gave it legal form.'

And so soon as the two wild spirits on whom I had been gazing had passed, I turned to regard the other ill-fated ones. One I saw whose figure would have resembled a lute, had his groin been severed where the human frame divides. The grievous dropsy, which, through the moisture assimilating amiss, so disproportioned the members that the face forms

False  
cookers;  
Master  
Adam.

<sup>1</sup> Griffolino.

<sup>2</sup> After Buoso Donati's death Gianni Schicchi personated him on his deathbed, in order to obtain a handsome mule which belonged to him.

a contrast to the belly<sup>1</sup>, forced him to hold his lips apart, as doth the hectic patient, who from thirst turns one lip toward his chin and the other upwards. 'O ye,' said he to us, 'who are exempt from punishment—though why I know not—in the world of woe, give heed and listen to Master Adam's sufferings: in my lifetime I had my fill of all that I desired, and now, alas! I pine for a drop of water. The rivulets which from the green hills of Casentino descend into the Arno, making their channels cool and moist, are ever present to me, and not in vain; for the sight of them parches me far more than the malady which makes my face so lean. The stern justice which chastises me takes occasion from the scene of my crime to speed still more the flight of my sighs. There is Romena<sup>2</sup>, the place where I counterfeited the currency stamped with the Baptist, by reason whereof the body which I left on earth was burnt. But could I behold in this place the vile soul of Guido, or that of Alessandro or their brother, for the fountain of Branda<sup>3</sup> I would not exchange the sight. Already one of them is within here, if the shades that circuit madly round speak truth; but what profit is that to me whose limbs are hampered? Were I still active enough to advance but an inch in a hundred years, I would ere this have started on the track, searching for him among this worthless folk, for all that their range is eleven miles in circuit, and not less than half a mile across. 'Tis through them that I am in such company; 'tis they who induced me to coin the florins which had three carats of base metal.'

<sup>1</sup> The face was lean and the belly distended.

<sup>2</sup> Count Guido II of Romena and his brothers instigated Master Adam to issue adulterated coins, counterfeiting the golden florin of Florence.

<sup>3</sup> The copious fountain of that name at Siena.



And I to him: 'Who are the two poor wretches lying close together on thy right side, who steam like hands dipped in water in the winter-time?' 'Here did I find them,' he replied, 'when I was flung down into this chasm, and since then they have not shifted their place, nor will do so, I ween, for evermore. One is the false woman who accused Joseph<sup>1</sup>; the other is Sinon, the treacherous Greek from Troy<sup>2</sup>: the acuteness of fever makes them emit such steam.' And one of them, who haply was annoyed at being named with such discredit, smote with his fist the speaker's hard paunch, which resounded as it had been a drum: and Master Adam struck him in the face with his arm, which appeared not less hard, saying to him: 'Albeit by the heaviness of my limbs I am deprived of movement, yet for such a function mine arm is free.' Whereupon he answered: 'Thou hadst it not so ready when thou wentest to the flames; but as much and more so when thou didst coin.' And the sufferer from dropsy: 'In this thou speakest truly; but thou wast not so truthful a witness, when thou wast questioned about the truth in Troy.' 'If I spake falsely, thou didst falsify the money,' said Sinon, 'and I am here for a single crime, but thou for more than any other devil.' 'Bethink thee, perjurer, of the horse,' replied he of the swollen paunch; 'and be it rueful to thee that it is known to all the world.' 'And thou mayst rue the thirst which makes thy tongue to crack,' said the Greek, 'and the infected moisture which raises thy belly thus like a hedge in front of thine eyes.' Thereto the coiner: 'By that saying thou openest thy mouth, as is thy wont, to thine own detriment; for, if I suffer thirst and am distended with fluid, thou hast burning fever and an aching head, and to

Perjurers;  
Sinon; his  
wrangle  
with Master  
Adam.

<sup>1</sup> Potiphar's wife; Gen. xxxix. 7 foll.

<sup>2</sup> He persuaded the Trojans to admit the wooden horse.

tempt thee to lick Narcissus' mirror<sup>1</sup> there would be no need of many words.' I was wholly absorbed in listening to them, when my Master said: 'Aye, look thy fill; a little more and I shall quarrel with thee.' When I was ware that he spake to me in anger, I turned toward him with shame so great, that even now it eddies through my memory. And like a man dreaming of misfortune, who in his dream wishes that it may be a dream, so that he longs for what is, as if it were not so; such was my case, for, desiring to excuse myself, I found no words, but excused myself notwithstanding, though I knew it not. 'Less shame,' my Master said, 'atones for a greater fault than thine hath been; wherefore unburden thee of all distress; and bethink thee that I am ever at thy side, if so be hereafter chance find thee where folk are engaged in a similar dispute, for the desire to hear such-like things is mean.'

## CANTO XXXI. THE NINTH CIRCLE; THE PIT OF HELL

The ninth  
Circle, of  
the traitors;  
the Giants.

One and the same tongue first wounded me, so that both my cheeks were tinged thereby, and then supplied me with the remedy: similarly, we are told, Achilles' spear, which his father also bore, was wont to bestow first a painful, and anon a kindly gift<sup>2</sup>. We turned our backs on the melancholy vale, passing over the embankment that girds it around, the which we crossed without uttering a word. There it was less than night and less than day, so that my sight penetrated

<sup>1</sup> Narcissus pined away for love of his own face reflected in a fountain.

<sup>2</sup> The classical story in its slightly perverted mediæval form was, that the spear which belonged first to Theseus and afterwards to Achilles, could heal by subsequent application the wounds which it inflicted.

but a short space; but I heard the blast of a horn, so loud that it would have deadened every thunderclap, which guided mine eyes, as they pursued an opposite direction to it, wholly to a single point: less terrible was the blast of Roland's horn after the disastrous rout, when Charlemagne lost the devoted host<sup>1</sup>. My face had not long been turned thitherward, when methought I saw a number of lofty towers; whereupon I said: 'Tell me, Master, what city is this?' And he to me: 'Because thou peerest through the darkness from too far off, the result is that thou wanderest in thy fancies. If thou approachest that place, thou wilt clearly see how much the sense is deceived at a distance; press on therefore a little farther.' Then taking me affectionately by the hand he said: 'Before we advance yet more, in order that the reality may surprise thee less, be it known to thee that these are not towers but giants; and they are, one and all, within the pit from the navel downwards around the embankment.' As, when a mist disperses, our sight little by little distinguishes an object concealed by the vapour which thickens the atmosphere, so, while I penetrated the dense dark air, drawing ever nearer to the edge, my mistake disappeared and my fear increased. For, even as above its circular rampart *Montereggione*<sup>2</sup> wears a crown of towers, so round the bank which encloses the pit towered aloft with half their persons the dread giants<sup>3</sup>, whom Jove still threatens from heaven when it thunders.

And now of one of them I discerned the face, the Nimrod.

<sup>1</sup> After the defeat of Roncevalles the sound of Roland's horn was said to have been heard by Charlemagne at a distance of eight miles.

<sup>2</sup> A castle about eight miles to the north of Siena, surrounded by a circular line of walls with twelve towers rising from it at intervals.

<sup>3</sup> These were the giants who made war on the Gods.

shoulders and breast, and in great part the belly, and both his arms down along his sides. Verily, when Nature ceased from the craft of producing creatures like these, she did exceeding well, thus depriving Mars of such-like ministers; and if she repents not of creating elephants and whales, the man of keen discernment will deem her more just and more prudent on this account; for where to power and evil will the equipment of the mind is superadded, mankind hath no available defence. His face, methought, in length and width resembled the pine-cone of St. Peter's at Rome<sup>1</sup>, and his other limbs were proportionate thereto; so that the embankment, which from the waist downwards served him for an apron, let so much of him be seen above, that three Frieslanders<sup>2</sup> would vainly have boasted that they could reach his hair; for his person to the length of thirty wide spans was visible to me downward from the point where a man buckles his cloak<sup>3</sup>. '*Rafel mai amech zabi almi*'<sup>4</sup>—such were the first utterances of that furious mouth, which sweeter psalms befitted not. And to him my Master said: 'Witless soul, keep to thy horn, and therewith relieve thyself, when anger or other passion seizes thee. Search about thy neck, and thou wilt find the cord which holds it fast, bewildered spirit; see now, how it lies across thy broad chest.' Anon to me he said: 'He is his own accuser; this is Nimrod<sup>5</sup>, through whose perverse attempt one single language is not spoken in the world. Let him be; let us not waste our words: for

<sup>1</sup> The height of this is 11 feet.

<sup>2</sup> They were noted for their tall stature.

<sup>3</sup> From his collar-bone. The giant's total height would be about 70 feet.

<sup>4</sup> These words were unintelligible.

<sup>5</sup> St. Augustine and others regarded Nimrod as a giant, and as having built the Tower of Babel, as Dante does here.



to him all other tongues are as meaningless, as his own un-intelligible speech is to others.'

So we pursued our course leftward, and a bowshot further Ephialtes off we found the next, who was wilder far and bigger. Who it was that had the power to bind him I cannot say, but he was holding his left arm pinioned in front, and the right arm behind, by a chain which shackled him from the neck downwards, so that on the part of his body that was visible it wound round to the number of five coils. 'This haughty being,' said my Leader, 'was fain to essay his power against highest Jove; such therefore is his meed. Ephialtes is his name; 'twas he that achieved the deeds of prowess when the Giants inspired the Gods with fear; the arms which then he waved he nevermore can move.' And I to him: 'If it be possible, I would fain have the sight of Briareus' prodigious form.' Whereto he replied: 'Hard by here thou shalt see Antaeus, who speaks and is not chained; he will deposit us in the lowest depth of guilt. The one whom thou wouldst behold is far beyond; and he is fettered, and like this one in shape, save that the aspect of his countenance is fiercer.' Never was earthquake of such violence, as to shake a tower so mightily as Ephialtes in a moment shook himself. Then was I more than ever in terror of death, and, had I not seen the chains, the apprehension itself would have sufficed to cause it.

Thereupon we advanced still further and reached Antaeus, who stood out above the rock full five ells, not including his head. 'O thou, who in the fateful valley, whereby Scipio was endowed with glory when Hannibal and his host turned their backs in flight<sup>1</sup>, didst carry off erewhile a thousand lions

Antaeus;  
he deposits  
the Poets  
in the Pit  
of Hell.

<sup>1</sup> The valley of Bagrada near Zama, where Hannibal was defeated by Scipio. The legend connecting Antaeus with it is given by Lucan, iv. 587 foll.

as thy spoil; and concerning whom some folk, it seems, still believe that, hadst thou taken part in thy brethren's daring war, the sons of Earth would have won the day: be not disdainful, but set us down below, where Cocytus<sup>1</sup> is congealed by the cold. Force us not to betake ourselves to Tityus or Typhon; the boon which is coveted here<sup>2</sup> this man can give; wherefore bend downward, and make not a wry mouth. It is still in his power to publish thy fame in the world, for he is alive, and hath length of days in prospect, unless God's grace call him prematurely to itself.' Thus spake the Master, and the other speedily put forth his hands whose mighty grip Hercules once felt, and caught hold of my Leader. When Virgil felt that he was seized, he said to me: 'Come hither, that I may grasp thee'; whereupon he formed of himself and me a single load. As the Garisenda<sup>3</sup> appears to one looking from beneath its incline, when a cloud passes over it in such wise that the tower leans towards it; such did Antaeus appear to me, as I was on the watch to see him bend; and so dread a moment it was, that I would fain have passed another way: yet lightly he deposited us on the floor where Lucifer and Judas are engulfed<sup>4</sup>, nor dallied there in his stooping posture, but like a ship's mast uplifted himself.

<sup>1</sup> Cocytus is the stream formed by the waters which descend from the upper Hell.

<sup>2</sup> To be remembered on earth.

<sup>3</sup> One of the leaning towers of Bologna, which is out of the perpendicular. What is here described is an optical illusion.

<sup>4</sup> The ice-floor of the Pit of Hell.

CANTO XXXII. THE NINTH CIRCLE;  
FIRST AND SECOND RINGS

Had I at command verses rough and grating, such as The male-factors in the ice. would besit the dismal cavity whereupon is the thrust of all the other rocks, I would distil more fully the essence of my imaginings; but seeing that I have them not, it is not without fear that I bring myself to speak thereof. 'Tis no adventure to be lightly undertaken, to describe the base of the whole universe, nor suited to a tongue that uses childish prattle. But may those Dames<sup>1</sup> aid my poetry, who aided Amphion to raise the walls of Thebes, so that the words may correspond to the reality. O rabble ill-fated above all, whose place of abode is so hard to tell of, better had ye been sheep or goats on earth. When we were down in the dark pit beneath the giant's feet, far below, and I was still gazing at the lofty wall, I heard one saying to me: 'Beware how thou passest; see thy feet trample not, as thou goest, the heads of the unhappy weary brothers.' Thereat I turned, and beheld in front of me and beneath my feet a lake, which by reason of the cold resembled glass rather than water<sup>2</sup>. A covering to its stream so dense as this never did the Danube in Austria make in winter-time, nor the Tanais beneath the chilling sky; so that, if Tambernica or Pietrapana<sup>3</sup> had fallen thereon, even at the edge no crack would have been heard. And as the frog sits croaking with its muzzle above water,

<sup>1</sup> The Muses. Amphion was fabled to have raised the walls of Thebes by his music with their aid.

<sup>2</sup> The ice symbolizes the cold-heartedness of the traitors, who are punished in this Circle.

<sup>3</sup> The Alpe Apuana (Pietrapana) are in the north-west of Tuscany. Tambernica has not been identified.

what time the country-woman oft dreams of gleanings<sup>1</sup>, so in the ice were fixed the doleful shades, livid up to the point where the blush of shame appears, and setting their teeth to the note of the stork. The face of each was downward turned; from the mouth the cold, from the eyes the sadness of the heart procures for itself evidence in all of them.

The first  
ring, or  
Caina.

When for a while I had gazed around, I looked toward my feet and beheld two in such close contact, that the hair of their heads was mingled together. 'Tell me who ye are,' I said, 'ye that thus clasp one another's breasts.' And they turned their necks; and when they had lifted up their faces toward me, their eyes, which ere this were only moist within, brimmed over, and the cold congealed the tears inside, and closed them fast again; never did clamp so firmly fasten two logs together: whereupon they butted one against the other like two he-goats, such fury mastered them. And one, who through the cold had lost both his ears, still looking downward, exclaimed: 'Why gazest thou so fixedly at us? If thou wouldst know who these two are, the valley whence the Bisenzio flows down, belonged to their father Albert and to them<sup>2</sup>. From one body they sprang; and shouldst thou explore Caina<sup>3</sup> throughout, thou wilt not find a shade more deserving to be set in the jelly—not him whose breast and shadow were rent with a single blow by Arthur's hand<sup>4</sup>; not Focaccia<sup>5</sup>; not him whose head so blocks my view that

<sup>1</sup> i.e. in the summer.

<sup>2</sup> These are the Conti Alberti of Mangena, through whose property the river Bisenzio flowed. They quarrelled and killed one another.

<sup>3</sup> The first ring of the ninth Circle, where those sinners are who violated the bond of relationship; it is so called from Cain, the first fratricide.

<sup>4</sup> Mordred, son of King Arthur, who tried to kill his father.

<sup>5</sup> He is said to have slain his uncle.



I see naught beyond, Sassol Mascheroni by name<sup>1</sup>: who he was, if thou art a Tuscan, thou now knowest well. ✓ And that thou mayst not involve me in further discourse, know that I was Camicion de' Pazzi, and I am awaiting Carlino<sup>2</sup> to exculpate me.'

Thereafter<sup>3</sup> I saw a thousand faces grinning with the cold, by reason of whom I shiver, and shall ever do so, at the sight of frozen pools. And while we were on our way toward the mid-point which is the centre of gravity, and I was trembling in the everlasting chill, whether it were the will of Heaven, or destiny, or chance, I know not, but as I walked among the heads, my foot smote one of them violently in the face. Wailing he cried to me: 'Wherefore dost thou trample me? Unless thou comest to add to the penalty of Mont' Aperti<sup>4</sup>, wherefore dost molest me?' And I: 'Pray, Master mine, await me here, so that through this one I may solve a doubt; after that I give thee leave to make what speed thou wilt.' My Leader halted: and to the spirit, who was still uttering violent imprecations, I said: 'Who art thou, that thus upbraidest others?' 'Who then art thou,' he answered, 'that, as thou passest through Antenora, smitest others' cheeks, so that, wert thou alive, it would be an outrage?' 'Alive I am,' was my reply, 'and it may be to thine advantage, if fame be thy desire, that among my other reminiscences I should record thy name.' And he to me: 'It is the opposite that I covet: away from

The second ring, or Antenora; Bocca degli Abati.

<sup>1</sup> He murdered his nephew.

<sup>2</sup> A relation of his, who was about to commit a worse crime.

<sup>3</sup> Here the second ring, or Antenora, is entered, where traitors to their country are punished; it is so called from Antenor, who was said to have conspired to betray Troy to the Greeks.

<sup>4</sup> Bocca degli Abati, who is speaking here, by his treachery caused the defeat of the Florentines by the Sienese at Montaperti.

hence, annoy me no more; in this plain thy fair speeches avail not.' Then did I seize him by the hair behind his head, saying: 'Either thou must give thy name, or not a lock shall remain upon thee.' And he to me: 'Strip my hair as thou wilt, I will not tell thee who I am, nor reveal it to thee, shouldst thou stumble on my head a thousand times.' Already I held his hair twisted in my hand, and had pulled out more than one lock, he the while yelling with his eyes fixed downward, when another cried: 'What ails thee, Bocca? Doth it not suffice thee to chatter with thy jaws, that thou must needs yell? What devil is vexing thee?' 'Now,' said I, 'I need not that thou shouldst speak, malevolent traitor, for to thy discredit I will bear off a true report of thee.' 'Away with thee,' he replied, 'and tell what thou wilt; but fail not, if thou escapest from this prison, to mention him whose tongue was but now so ready. He suffers here for the Frenchmen's bribes; "I saw him of Duera<sup>1</sup>," thou mayst say, "there, where the sinners are in the cool." In case thou shouldst be asked who else was there, he of Beccheria<sup>2</sup> is by thy side, whose throat Florence severed. Further in that direction methinks is Gianni de' Soldanier, in company with Ganelon and Tribaldello<sup>3</sup>, who opened the gates of Faenza when men slept.'

Count  
Ugolino and  
Archbishop  
Roger.

We had already quitted him, when I beheld two of them frozen in a single cavity, in such wise that the one's head formed a covering to the other's: and even as the starving man devours bread, so did the uppermost fix his teeth in the

<sup>1</sup> Buoso da Duera, who for a bribe withdrew his forces from before the French at the time of Charles of Anjou's advance.

<sup>2</sup> Tesauo di Beccheria, who was beheaded as a traitor at Florence in 1258.

<sup>3</sup> Of these three Gianni de' Soldanier was a traitor at Florence, Tribaldello at Faenza, and Ganelon in the legends of Charlemagne.

other at the point where the brain joins the nape of the neck. Not otherwise did Tydeus<sup>1</sup> in his wrath gnaw Menalippus' temples, than he did the skull and the purtenance thereof. 'O thou, who by so bestial a token dost display thy hatred toward him whom thou gnawest, tell me the cause thereof,' I said, 'on the understanding that, if thou hast a just complaint against him, when I know who ye are and what his sin, in the world above I may still requite thee, if that wherewith I speak be not withered by death.'

### CANTO XXXIII. THE NINTH CIRCLE; SECOND AND THIRD RINGS

Uplifting his mouth from that fell repast, the sinner wiped it on the hair of the head which he had marred behind, and anon began: 'Thou wouldst have me renew the desperate grief which oppresses my heart even now at the mere thought, before I speak thereof. But if my words may be a seed that shall bring forth infamy for the traitor whom I gnaw, thou shalt see me speak and weep withal. I know not who thou art, nor in what way thou hast descended here below, but as I listen to thee, thou seemest to me assuredly to be a Florentine. Know then that I was Count Ugolino, and this one the Archbishop Roger<sup>2</sup>; now I will tell thee why I am so dire a neighbour to him. That owing to his malicious devices, when I reposed confidence in him, I was made prisoner and afterward put to death, there is no need for me to say. Wherefore thou shalt hear what cannot have reached

The story  
of Count  
Ugolino.

<sup>1</sup> One of the Seven against Thebes.

<sup>2</sup> These two personages were the leaders of the Guelf and Ghibelline factions respectively in Pisa in 1288.

thine ears—I mean the cruelty of my death—and shalt know whether he hath wronged me. A narrow fissure in the cage which is called from me the Tower of Hunger, and wherein hereafter others shall be incarcerated, had already through its aperture revealed to me many moons, when I dreamt the terrible dream which rent for me the veil that hid the future. Methought this man as huntsman-in-chief and leader was chasing the wolf and its cubs to the mountain which hinders the Pisans from seeing Lucca<sup>1</sup>. In front of him he had set Gualandi and Sismondi and Lanfranchi<sup>2</sup>, accompanied by lean hounds, eager and well trained. After a brief course the father and sons seemed to me weary, and methought I saw their flanks rent by the sharp fangs. When I awoke before the morrow morn, I was ware that my sons<sup>3</sup> who were with me were wailing in their sleep and asking for bread. Hard-hearted indeed must thou be, if thou grieveest not now at the thought of what my heart forboded; nay, if thou weepest not, what can move thee to tears? They had risen now, and the hour was drawing nigh when our food was wont to be brought, and each was in suspense by reason of his dream, when I heard below us the entrance to the horrible tower nailed up; whereupon I gazed speechless at my sons' faces. I did not weep, so petrified was my heart: they wept, and my Anselmuccio said, "Thou lookest so strangely, father; what ails thee?" For all that I shed no tear, nor made answer all that day and the following night, until the sun once more rose on the world. So soon as a faint ray had entered the dismal dungeon, and in four faces

<sup>1</sup> The Monte San-Giuliano, which intervenes between Pisa and Lucca.

<sup>2</sup> Three Ghibelline families.

<sup>3</sup> His sons Gaddo and Ugucione, and his grandsons Anselmo and Il Brigata, were imprisoned with him.



I read mine own looks, through anguish I gnawed my two hands. And they, supposing that I did so from desire to eat, on a sudden arose, and said: "Father, we should suffer far less wert thou to eat of us; thou didst vest us in these sorry robes of flesh, do thou divest us." Then did I calm myself lest I should increase their woe; that day and the following we abode all in silence: ah! cruel earth, wherefore didst thou not open? After we had reached the fourth day, Gaddo flung himself at full length at my feet, exclaiming: "Father mine, why dost thou not aid me?" There he died; and as surely as thou dost see me, between the fifth day and the sixth I saw the three, one after the other, fall; whereupon, being now blind, I set myself to grope over each one of them, and two days long after they were dead I called them: at last hunger did what sorrow could not do<sup>1</sup>. When thus he had spoken, with eyes askance he seized afresh the wretched skull with his teeth, which were strong as a dog's to waste the bone. Ah! Pisa, thou scandal of the peoples who inhabit the fair land where *Sì* is heard<sup>2</sup>; since thy neighbours are slow to punish thee, let Caprara and Gorgona<sup>3</sup> advance and block the Arno at its mouth, so that every soul within thee may be drowned: for, if Count Ugolino was reputed to have deprived thee of thy castles by treachery, thou wast not justified in exposing his children to such suffering. Their youthful age, thou modern Thebes<sup>4</sup>, rendered Uguccione and Brigata innocent, and the other two whom my verse names above.

We passed on to where the ice rudely enwraps another

<sup>1</sup> i.e. caused his death.

<sup>2</sup> Italy.

<sup>3</sup> Two islands off the coast of Tuscany.

<sup>4</sup> Thebes was famed for its tragic horrors.

The third  
ring, or  
Tolomea.

folk<sup>1</sup>, not facing downward, but lying wholly on their backs. There the very tears prevent their shedding tears, and their grief, meeting an obstacle on the surface of the eyes, turns back within to increase the anguish: for the former tears congeal together, and like a mask of crystal fill all the cavity beneath the eyebrows. And albeit by reason of the cold all sensation had quitted my face, as it had been a callous spot, methought I began to feel a breath of wind; wherefore I said: 'My Master, who is it that moves this? Are not all exhalations extinguished here below?' And he in answer: 'Soon wilt thou reach a point, where thine eye will furnish thee with a reply, when thou seest the cause which produces the breeze.'

The souls,  
whose  
bodies live  
on earth.

And one of the wretches in the crust of ice exclaimed to us: 'Ye souls so wildly criminal that the last station is assigned to you, remove from mine eyes their hard coverings awhile, so that I may give vent to the grief wherewith my heart is charged, ere the tears freeze again.' So I to him: 'If it be thy wish that I should relieve thee, tell me who thou art, and if I free thee not may I be bound to descend to the lowest level of the ice.' He then made reply: 'I am Frate Alberigo<sup>2</sup>; I am the dealer in the fruits of the bad garden, who now receive dates for figs.' 'Oh!' said I to him, 'art thou then already dead?' And he to me: 'How my body fares in the world above, I am all unaware. This ring of Tolomea hath this advantage, that oftentimes a spirit descends hither before Atropos sets it on its way. And

<sup>1</sup> This is the third ring, or Tolomea, where those who betrayed their friends and companions are placed; the name is derived from Ptolemaeus the son of Abubus, who slew Simon the Maccabee and his sons at a banquet; 1 Macc. xvi. 11-17.

<sup>2</sup> This man caused his brother and his nephew to be murdered at a banquet, the signal to the assassins being, 'Bring in the fruit.'

that thou mayst the more willingly remove from my face the incrusted tears, know that, so soon as the soul plays the traitor, as I did, it is robbed of its body by a demon, which thereafter hath the disposal of it, until its appointed time is fully run. The soul falls downward into this direful pit: and haply the body of the shade which winters here behind me is still visible above. Thou shouldst know, if thou hast but now come down; he is Ser Branca d'Oria<sup>1</sup>, and many a year hath passed since he was thus imprisoned.' 'Methinks,' said I to him, 'thou art deluding me, for Branca d'Oria is in nowise dead, but eats and drinks and sleeps and wears raiment.' 'In the dike of Malebranche<sup>2</sup> above,' said he, 'where boils the sticky pitch, Michel Zanche had not yet arrived, when this one left in his place a devil within his body, and so did a relative of his who was an accomplice in his treachery. But now reach forth thine hand hither, and open mine eyes'; and I did not open them for him, and in dealing with him 'twas courtesy to be churlish. Ah! ye Genoese, men alien to all right conduct, full of all corruption, wherefore are ye not expelled from the world? For in company with the worst spirit of Romagna<sup>3</sup> I found one of your number so base, that for his crimes his soul is already plunged in Cocytus, while his body is still seen alive in the upper world.

<sup>1</sup> A member of the Doria family of Genoa. He caused his father-in-law Michel Zanche to be murdered at a feast in 1290.

<sup>2</sup> The fifth *bolgia*, where were the devils called Malebranche. For Michel Zanche, cp. *Inf.* xxii. 88.

<sup>3</sup> Frate Alberigo, who came from Faenza in the Romagna.

CANTO XXXIV. THE NINTH CIRCLE;  
FOURTH RING

The fourth  
ring, or  
Giudecca.

*'The banners of the Prince of Hell are displayed'*<sup>1</sup> opposite to us; wherefore look in front of thee,' my Master said, 'to see if thou canst distinguish him.' As, when a dense mist doth breathe, or when night is gathering in our hemisphere, a mill turned by the wind appears from afar, such a structure methought at that moment I beheld: anon, by reason of the wind, in default of other shelter I withdrew behind my Leader. I had reached the place<sup>2</sup>—and with fear I express it in verse—where the shades were wholly beneath the ice, and were visible through it like a mote in glass. Some lie flat, others are placed perpendicularly, one with his head, one with his soles upward; another, bent like a bow, turns his face toward his feet. When we had advanced so far that my Master thought fit to disclose to my view the being whose countenance was once so fair, he moved from before me, and made me halt, saying: 'Lo! here is Dis<sup>3</sup>; here is the spot where thou must arm thyself with fortitude.' How numb and weak I then became, ask me not, Reader, for I cannot write it, seeing that no words would be adequate to the task. Death came not to me, nor did life abide with me; now consider for thyself, if thou hast a grain of wit, what was my state, when both one and the other failed me.

The emperor of the realm of pain from the middle of his

<sup>1</sup> The original of the words in italics is adapted from a Latin hymn.

<sup>2</sup> The fourth ring, of those who betrayed their benefactors. It is called Giudecca from Judas Iscariot, the arch-traitor.

<sup>3</sup> The classical equivalent of Lucifer.



breast emerged from the ice; and I approach nearer to the stature of a giant, than the giants reach the measure of his arms: conceive now how huge must be the whole which can correspond to such parts. If he was once as fair as now he is hideous, and then raised his eyebrows in defiance of his Maker, well may he be the source of all woe. Oh, how great a marvel it seemed to me, when I perceived that his head had three faces—one in front, which was red, while the other two joined it just over the middle of each shoulder, and met at the crown; and that on the right seemed between white and yellow, and that on the left like the natives of the land whence the Nile flows down<sup>1</sup>. Beneath each of them projected two vast wings, corresponding in size to so mighty a bird: sails on the sea I never saw that could match them. Feathered they were not, but fashioned like a bat's; and these he waved, so that three winds proceeded from him. By these Cocytus was wholly turned to ice; with six eyes he wept, and over three chins his tears and bloodstained slaver dripped. In each of his mouths he was mangling a sinner with his teeth, as with a brake, so that he thus tortured three of them. For the one in front the biting was as nothing compared with the clawing, insomuch that at times the spine remained completely bare of skin. 'That spirit above which hath the severest punishment,' said my Master, 'is Judas Iscariot, whose head is within, while he stretches forth his legs. Of the other two, whose heads have the lower place, he that hangs from the black muzzle is Brutus; see how he writhes without uttering a word: and the other, who seems so large of limb, is Cassius<sup>2</sup>. But night is rising

Lucifer;  
Judas,  
Brutus and  
Cassius.

<sup>1</sup> The Ethiopians, who were black.

<sup>2</sup> Brutus and Cassius are assigned here as having been the betrayers of Julius Caesar, the founder of the divinely appointed system of the Empire.

again, and now 'tis time for us to depart, for we have seen the whole.'

The Poets  
pass Lucifer.

As he desired me, I clasped his neck, and he selected the fitting time and place, and, when the wings were opened wide, laid hold of Lucifer's shaggy flanks: anon from one shock to another he let himself down between the matted hair and the crusts of ice. When we reached the thigh-joint just where the haunch is thickest, my Leader with fatigue and anguish turned round his head where his legs had been, and clung tight to the hair like one ascending, so that I thought I was returning once more into Hell. 'Hold fast by me,' said my Master, panting as for weariness, 'for it is by this weird ladder that we must escape from utter woe.' Then he passed out through the opening in a rock, and, seating me upon the edge, thereafter advanced toward me his wary step. I raised mine eye, and when I thought to see Lucifer as I had left him, I beheld him holding his legs aloft. How perplexed I then became, the dull folk can best judge, who know not the nature of the point which I had passed<sup>1</sup>. 'Arise, stand up,' the Master said: 'the way is long and the path is rude, and already the sun, which hath gone back, is half-way to the third hour.' It was no palace-chamber where we were, but a natural dungeon, with an uneven floor and defective light.

The centre  
of gravity.

'Before I quit the abyss, Master mine,' I said, when I had arisen, 'grant me a brief converse to deliver me from error. Where is the ice? and how comes it that this being stands thus inverted? and how in so short time hath the sun passed over from eve to morn?' And he to me: 'Thou fanciest thyself still on yonder side of the centre, where I clung to the hair of the evil worm that pierces the world.

<sup>1</sup> The centre of the earth, which is the centre of gravity.

# PURGATORY

## CANTO I. INTRODUCTORY

To traverse fairer waters doth the bark of my genius now  
 set her sails, leaving behind her so cruel a sea; and of that  
 second realm will I sing, wherein the spirit of man is purified,  
 and becomes worthy to ascend to heaven. But here let my  
 dead poetry awake to life again, ye sacred Muses, forasmuch  
 as I am yours; and here let Calliope take a somewhat higher  
 strain, accompanying my song with that melody, which smote  
 the ill-fated Magpies<sup>1</sup> with such force that they felt their  
 doom was sealed.

Invocation  
 of the  
 Muses.

The sweet hue of oriental sapphire, which was diffused  
 over the tranquil scene from the mid-point of the clear sky  
 even to the primal circle<sup>2</sup>, renewed to mine eye the sense of  
 joy, so soon as I emerged from the deathly air, which had  
 saddened mine eyes and my heart. The beauteous planet  
 which incites to love<sup>3</sup> was causing all the east to smile, while  
 it obscured the Fishes which were in its train. I turned me  
 toward the right, and gave heed to the other pole; and  
 I beheld four stars, never before seen save by the primaeval  
 folk<sup>4</sup>. In their flamelets methought the heaven rejoiced:  
 clime of the north, how great thy loss, for that the sight of  
 those is denied thee!

The four  
 stars.

<sup>1</sup> Nine maidens, who challenged the Muses to a contest in singing, and, having been defeated, were changed into magpies.

<sup>2</sup> From the zenith to the horizon.

<sup>3</sup> Venus.

<sup>4</sup> These stars represent allegorically the four cardinal virtues of Justice, Prudence, Fortitude and Temperance.

Cato, the  
Guardian of  
Purgatory.

When I had ceased to regard them, turning a little toward the other pole, on which side the Wain was now out of sight, I beheld hard by me an old man<sup>1</sup> all alone, worthy in his aspect of such reverence, that a son owes no greater tribute to a father. His beard was long and flecked with white, and even such too was the semblance of his hair, which fell in two bands to his breast. So brightly did the rays of the four holy lights illuminate his face, that the sight of him was like the sun before me. 'Who are ye, that against the course of the darkling stream have escaped from the eternal prison?' So spake he, moving those dignified locks. 'Who hath been your guide? Who served to light you, the while ye were emerging from the depths of night, which ever shroud in darkness the infernal vale? Are the laws of the abyss thus violated? or is a new ordinance initiated in heaven, that as condemned souls ye come unto my rocks?'

Virgil  
appeals to  
him for  
admission.

Then did my Leader take hold of me, and by his words and hand and gestures caused me to bend my knees and incline my brow. Anon he replied to him: 'I came not of myself; a Lady<sup>2</sup> descended from heaven, by reason of whose prayers I succoured this one with my company. But since it is thy pleasure that the real nature of our condition should be further revealed to thee, I cannot for my part say thee nay. This man hath never seen his closing day; but through his folly he drew so nigh thereto, that brief time indeed remained for him to retrace his steps. Even as I said, I was dispatched to him to save him; and to accomplish this there was no other way than that which I have set myself to follow. I have shown him all the guilty folk; and now I purpose to show him those spirits who purify themselves beneath thy

<sup>1</sup> Cato the Younger, the rigid Stoic moralist.

<sup>2</sup> Beatrice.



guardianship. In what manner I have conducted him it would be a long tale to tell thee: power descends from on high, which aids me in leading him to see thee and to hear thee. Now may it please thee to look favourably on his coming; liberty is the object of his quest, the value whereof he knows, who for its sake forfeits life. Thou dost know it; for to thee death for its sake was not bitter in Utica, where thou didst leave the robe which on the great day will shine so bright. The eternal decrees are not violated by us, for this one is alive, and Minos holds me not captive, but I abide in the Circle<sup>1</sup> where are the chaste eyes of thy Marcia<sup>2</sup>, who in her looks still beseeches thee, thou saintly heart, to deem her thine; for her love's sake then be indulgent to us. Suffer us to pass through thy seven realms; I shall return her thanks for thy goodwill, if thou dost approve of being mentioned there below.'

Thereupon he said: 'Marcia found such favour in mine eyes, while I was in yonder world, that whatever boon she desired of me I granted. Now that she dwells beyond the evil river<sup>3</sup> she can no more move me, in accordance with that law which was ordained when I came forth thence<sup>4</sup>. But if, as thou sayest, a Lady from heaven doth move and guide thee, persuasive words are needless; suffice it thee that for her sake thou askest me. Go then, and see thou gird this one with a smooth rush<sup>5</sup>, and lave his face, so that thou mayst cause all grime to disappear therefrom: for it would not be meet that, while his eye is dimmed by any mist, he should present himself before the first minister, who is of the

Cato allows them to enter.

<sup>1</sup> Limbo.

<sup>2</sup> Cato's wife.

<sup>3</sup> The Acheron.

<sup>4</sup> At the time of our Lord's descent into Hell.

<sup>5</sup> The bending rush is typical of humility, which becomes a soul entering Purgatory.

number of those in Paradise<sup>1</sup>. This islet throughout its circuit, at its lowest verge where it is smitten by the waves, bears rushes on its soft mold. No other growths, such as put forth leaves or harden into stems, can exist there, because they yield not to the beating of the water. Thereafter return not in this direction; the sun now rising will indicate to you the easiest point for ascending the Mountain.' With that he disappeared; and I arose without uttering a word, and drew close to my Leader, and fixed mine eyes upon him. He thus began: 'Follow thou my steps; let us turn back, for it is on this side that the plain slopes to its lowest border.'

Preliminary  
observ-  
ances.

The dawn was chasing the breeze of morn which was flying before it, so that I perceived from afar that the sea was ruffled. We pursued our way over the solitary plain, like one returning to a lost track, who until he find it feels to be journeying in vain. When we reached a place where the dew holds its own against the sun, and from being in a chilly region evaporates slowly, my Master gently laid both his hands outspread on the grass; whereupon, as I was ware of his design, I stretched forth to him my tear-stained cheeks; and there did he clearly reveal to view my natural hue which Hell had concealed. Anon we arrived at the desert shore, which never saw its waters navigated by any who thereafter had experience of return. There did he gird me in accordance with another's behests. O strange! Such as was the lowly plant which he selected, from the spot where he plucked it another at once sprang up afresh.

<sup>1</sup> The Angel who guards the entrance of Purgatory proper.

## CANTO II. ANTE-PURGATORY

The sun had now reached the horizon, the highest point of the meridian circle whereof lies over Jerusalem; and night, which revolves opposite to him, was issuing from the Ganges with the Scales, which fall from her hand when she wins the mastery: so that at my present station the fair Aurora's white and vermeil cheeks from advanced age were passing into orange<sup>1</sup>. We were still by the sea-shore, like folk who ponder on their journey, in spirit advancing but in body dallying; when lo! as at the approach of morn by reason of his dense vapours Mars grows red down in the west above the sea-level, so did I see—and may I once more behold it<sup>2</sup>—a light approaching o'er the sea with such speed, that no bird's flight could rival its motion. And when I saw this again, after having for a moment withdrawn mine eyes from it that I might question my Leader, it had grown larger and more luminous. Then on either side of it appeared an indistinct white object, and gradually another such came forth from it below. My Master as yet spake not a word until the first white features revealed themselves as wings; but when he clearly recognized the pilot, he cried: 'See, see thou bend thy knees; behold the Angel of God; fold thy hands: henceforth thou shalt behold such-like ministers. Mark, how he scorns all human instruments, so that he needs no oar, nor other sail than his wings, between so distant shores<sup>3</sup>. Mark, how he has raised them toward heaven,

An angel  
conducting  
a band of  
spirits.

<sup>1</sup> What is signified in this passage is, that it was sunrise in Purgatory.

<sup>2</sup> Dante prays that he may return to Purgatory after death as a soul destined for Heaven.

<sup>3</sup> These were the mouth of the Tiber, where the souls destined for Purgatory assemble (see below), and the Mountain of Purgatory.

waving the air with that eternal plumage, which changes not like feathers of mortal growth.' Anon, as the bird of heaven came ever towards us, he was more clearly revealed, so that, when near, he overpowered mine eyes, and I let them droop; he the while came to shore in a swift bark, so light that the water engulfed no portion thereof. In the stern the celestial helmsman stood, so glorious that he seemed by a sure title blest; and more than a hundred spirits were seated within. 'When Israel came out of Egypt' they were singing all together in unison, with what follows of the text of that psalm. Then signed he them with the sign of the holy cross; whereupon they all leapt forth upon the shore, and he departed as speedily as he came.

The spirits  
approach  
Dante.

The crowd which remained there seemed strange to the spot, gazing around them, like one who essays a new experience. The sun, which with its clear shafts had chased Capricorn beyond the mid-heaven<sup>1</sup>, was darting in every direction the rays of day, when the strange folk raised their brows towards us, saying: 'Show us, if ye know, the way which leads to the Mountain.' And Virgil replied: 'Haply ye suppose we are acquainted with this place, but we are strangers even as ye. We came but now, a short time before you, by another way, which was so rough and steep, that now the ascent will appear child's-play to us.' The spirits, who from my breathing were ware that I was still alive, through amazement turned pale; and as round a messenger who bears the olive-branch<sup>2</sup> the folk crowd to hear his news, nor doth any appear loth to trample on his neighbour, so did those

<sup>1</sup> This means that the sun had risen. As Capricorn was three signs of the Zodiac in front of Aries, in which the sun now was, Capricorn would pass the meridian as the sun rose.

<sup>2</sup> This was a token of good news.



happy souls, one and all, rivet their eyes on my face, forgetting, as it seemed, to go where they might make them fair<sup>1</sup>.

One of them I saw advancing to embrace me, with affection so great that he impelled me to do the like. O shades unreal in all but outward show! Thrice did I clasp my hands behind him, and as oft I brought them back upon my breast. Methinks I expressed surprise in my countenance; whereat the shade smiled and drew back, and I advanced in pursuit of him. In tender tones he bade me halt; and then I recognized him, and besought him to wait awhile and converse with me. He replied: 'I loved thee while I was in the flesh, and now that I am freed from it I love thee still; therefore I wait: but for what reason art thou journeying?' 'My Casella<sup>2</sup>,' I said, 'the purpose of my present journey is, that I may return to this place once more; but how comes it to pass that so long a time hath been lost to thee<sup>3</sup>?' And he to me: 'I have suffered no wrong, if he who embarks whom and when he pleases, hath once and again denied me this passage, for his will is determined by a righteous will. Nevertheless, for three months past he hath taken on board with full acquiescence all who have wished to come<sup>4</sup>; whence I, who had just then betaken me to the shore where the stream of Tiber enters the sea, was graciously admitted by him. Toward that river-mouth hath he now winged his way, for there the souls ever assemble, which descend not in the direction of Acheron.'

Casella the musician.

<sup>1</sup> To Purgatory proper, where they would be cleansed from sin.

<sup>2</sup> A musician and friend of Dante.

<sup>3</sup> He had been dead some time.

<sup>4</sup> The time here meant is the early part of the great year of Jubilee, 1300 A.D., when indulgences were freely dispensed.

Cato  
reproves  
their delay.

And I: 'If no new law deprives thee of the memory or practice of those strains of love, which were wont to assuage all my desires, be pleased by their means to refresh a whit my spirit, which through journeying hither in the body is so weary.' He then began: 'Love that within my mind doth hold discourse'<sup>1</sup>; and so dulcet were the notes, that their melody still sounds in mine ears. My Master and I and his companion spirits seemed wholly contented, as if naught else affected any of our minds. One and all we were rapt in attention to his strains; when behold the dignified old man, who cried: 'What means this, ye lingering spirits? What negligence, what delay is here? Speed you to the Mountain, to remove the film which obscures your sight of God.' Like doves, which, when gathering corn or tares, feed all together quietly, nor display their wonted pride; yet, if aught appears to frighten them, hastily desert their food, being assailed by more pressing care: so saw I that crowd of newly arrived spirits quit the singing and hie them toward the hillside, like one who pursues his way unknowing of his goal: nor less precipitate was our own departure.

### CANTO III. ANTE-PURGATORY

Dante perceives that  
Virgil casts  
no shadow.

Albeit the suddenness of their flight dispersed those spirits over the plain, in the direction of the Mountain whither reason impels us, I drew close to my trusty companion; and how without him should I have pursued my journey? Who would have conducted me up the mountain-side? He appeared to me self-reproached. O noble, stainless conscience, how bitter to thy taste is a trifling fault! When his foot-

<sup>1</sup> The first line of one of Dante's Canzoni.

steps ceased from haste, which deprives every movement of dignity, my mind, which ere that was circumscribed, widened its field of vision as if eager to inquire, and I turned mine eyes to the hill which rises highest toward heaven above the waters. The sun, which was flaming all red behind me, was broken n front of me, tracing the shape formed by his rays as they fell on me. When I perceived that before me alone the ground was darkened, in fear of being deserted I turned me sideways: and my Comforter, facing full toward me, thus addressed me: 'Wherefore dost thou still distrust me? Believest thou not that I am with thee as thy guide? 'Tis already evening there where the body lies buried within which I cast a shade; Naples possesses it, and from Brundisium it was taken<sup>1</sup>. Now, if no object is obscured in front of me, be not surprised at this, more than at the heavens, which obstruct not the passage of a ray from one to another<sup>2</sup>. To suffer torments through heat and cold bodies like mine are disposed by the supreme Goodness, who wills not that to us his mode of working should be revealed. Foolish is he who hopes that our reason can traverse the illimitable way, which one substance in three Persons follows. Be content, human race, with the fact; for, had ye been able to comprehend the whole scheme, there had been no need for Mary to give birth: and ye have been cognizant of the fruitless longings of men, so wise<sup>3</sup>, that in that case those desires of theirs would have been fulfilled, which are now assigned to them as their eternal bane. 'Tis of Aristotle and Plato that I speak, and

<sup>1</sup> Virgil died at Brundisium, but his remains were transferred to Naples.

<sup>2</sup> The nine concentric spheres which formed Dante's Heaven, though they were material, were diaphanous.

<sup>3</sup> Of the eminent heathen in Limbo.

of many besides them.' Thereat he bowed his head and spake no more, but remained distraught.

The spirits  
of the  
excom-  
municate.

Meanwhile we reached the Mountain's foot; there we found the rock so sheer, that legs, however active, could not scale it. Compared with that, the wildest, loneliest track between Lerici and Turbia<sup>1</sup> is an easy, open stairway. 'Now who knows on which side there is a gradual slope,' said my Master, as he halted, 'so that one not furnished with wings may make the ascent?' And while he kept his eyes cast down, scrutinizing the character of the path, and I was gazing upwards around the rock, on my left hand there came in view a company of spirits, who while they advanced towards us, seemed not to be moving, so slow was their progress<sup>2</sup>. 'Master,' I said, 'lift up thine eyes; lo! on this side there are folk who will give us counsel, if from thyself thou canst not obtain it.' He regarded them, and answered with cheerful looks: 'Thither let us go, for they linger on their way; and thou, sweet son, be steadfast in hope.' That band of souls was still distant a good stone's cast from us (still distant, I mean, after we had advanced a thousand paces toward them), when they all drew close to the hard rocks of the lofty precipice, and stood stark and motionless, like the mistrustful traveller who stops to reconnoitre. 'O happy in your death, spirits already in the number of the elect,' Virgil began, 'I pray you by that peace, which, as I deem, is in store for you all, tell us at what point the mountain slopes so that it may be possible to ascend, for

<sup>1</sup> These places represent respectively the eastern and western extremities of the Riviera.

<sup>2</sup> The spirits who are detained for a time in Ante-Purgatory are the Negligent, or those who deferred their repentance to the end of their lives. The first class of these, whom we meet with here, were those who, though they repented at the last, died under the ban of the Church.



that which the man of experience specially dreads is waste of time.' As from the fold the silly sheep come forth by ones and twos and threes, while the others stand in timid mood sinking to earth their eyes and mouth; and what the first doth the others likewise do, crowding upon him if he halts, all innocent and gentle, nor know the reason why; so saw I then the foremost of that favoured flock advance towards us, modest in aspect and in movement dignified. No sooner did those in front perceive that on my right side the sunlight on the earth was broken, so that my shadow was thrown toward the rock, than they stopped and drew back a little space; and all the rest who followed in their steps, though unaware of the cause, did even so. 'Without waiting for you to ask I do confess to you, that this which ye see is a human body, whereby the sun's rays upon the ground are parted. Be not amazed thereat; but be assured, that it is not without the aid of power from on high that he seeks to scale this wall.' So spake the Master: and that worthy folk replied, signalling with the backs of their hands: 'Turn round, then, and pass on in front of us.'

Then one of them began: 'Whosoe'er thou art, turn thy *Manfred*. face as thou goest, and bethink thee whether in the other world thou ever sawest me.' I turned me toward him and regarded him steadfastly: fair he was and handsome, and of noble mien, but one of his eyebrows had been cleft by a blow. When in humble terms I disclaimed having ever seen him, he said: 'Now look'; and showed me a wound at the top of his breast. Then with a smile he added: 'I am *Manfred*,'

<sup>1</sup> *Manfred*, who was an illegitimate son of *Frederic II*, was crowned king of Sicily in 1258, but was excommunicated by successive Popes, and by them *Charles of Anjou* was summoned to oppose him. He was killed at the battle of Benevento.

grandson of the empress Constance; wherefore, when thou returnest, I pray thee go to my fair daughter, who is mother of the honour of Sicily and of Aragon<sup>1</sup>, and tell her the truth, if aught else be reported. After my body was rent by two mortal wounds, I committed myself with tears to Him who willingly pardons. My sins were horrible; but so wide is the embrace of the infinite Goodness, that He accepts whate'er betakes itself to Him. Had the pastor of Cosenza, whom Clement set on my track, at that time read aright this page in God's word, the bones of my body would still be at the head of the bridge nigh Benevento, guarded by the ponderous cairn<sup>2</sup>. Now the rain wets them and the wind moves them without the limits of the Kingdom, near the Verde's banks<sup>3</sup>, whither he removed them with lights extinguished. Through their malediction souls are not so utterly lost, that the eternal love cannot be regained, so long as hope hath a particle of green. True it is, that he who dies in contumacy toward Holy Church, albeit he repents at the last, is doomed to abide without this bank thirtyfold the time which he hath lived in a state of defiance, if such appointed term be not reduced by pious prayers. Consider now, whether thou canst promote my happiness by disclosing to my noble Constance how that thou hast seen me, and withal this prohibition; since we who are here can profit greatly by the help of those on earth.'

<sup>1</sup> Manfred's daughter Constance married Peter III of Aragon, and was mother of Frederic king of Sicily and James king of Aragon.

<sup>2</sup> The story was that after Manfred's body was buried near Benevento the bishop of Cosenza by Clement IV's orders removed it thence, because the site was in papal territory.

<sup>3</sup> The Verde, now the Garigliano, was the boundary of the kingdom of Naples on that side.

CANTO IV. ANTE-PURGATORY

When through delight, or maybe through pain, which one Absorption of mind. of our energies conceives, the soul concentrates itself wholly on that energy, to other of its faculties it seems to pay no heed; and this confutes the erroneous view, that more than one soul is generated within us. So it comes to pass that, when aught is heard or seen which keeps the soul engrossed upon it, time passes by without our being aware: for the faculty which listens to what is heard is one, and that which dominates the soul as a whole is another; the latter is as it were bound, the former is in free exercise. This truth was brought home to me by experience, when I listened wonderingly to that spirit; for though full fifty degrees the sun had risen, yet was I unaware thereof, when we reached a point where those souls with one voice exclaimed to us: 'Here is that for which ye inquired.'

Wider is oftentimes the gap which the villager hedges up The ascent through the cliffs. with a small forkful of his thorns, when the grape is gathering colour, than was the opening by which my Leader, and I in his footsteps, ascended alone, so soon as the troop departed from us. A man may make his way to Sanleo, or descend to Noli, or mount to the summit of Bismantova<sup>1</sup>, by the help of the feet alone, but here one must needs fly—with the swift wings and plumage, I mean, of strong desire—in following his guidance, who was the source of hope and light to me. Within the rifted rock we mounted, and on either hand the wall hemmed us in, and for the pathway below

<sup>1</sup> The steep stairway here is compared to the ascent to Sanleo near San Marino, and that to Bismantova near Reggio in the Modenese, and to the descent to Noli on the western Riviera.

both hands and feet were needed. When we reached the upper rim of the lofty precipice on the open hillside, I said : ' Master, which direction shall we take ? ' And he to me : ' See that thy footsteps slip not ; ascend the Mountain steadily in my rear, until we meet with some sage escort.' So high was the summit that it defied the sight, and far more steeply than a line drawn from the centre to the half-quadrant<sup>1</sup> did the ground rise. I was weary, when I thus began : ' Turn thee, beloved Father ; see how, if thou dost not stop, I must remain alone.' ' Plod thy way thus far, my son,' he said, indicating a ridge of rock a short space higher up, which on that side runs round the entire Mountain. So greatly did his words stimulate me, that I constrained myself, following him on hands and knees, until the encircling ledge was beneath my feet.

The sun on  
the left-  
hand.

There we both seated us, facing the east, on which side we had ascended, for a man is wont to find pleasure in looking back. First I turned mine eyes toward the low-lying shores ; anon I raised them to the sun, and was seized with wonder at our being smitten on the left side by his rays. It escaped not the Poet that I was gazing in amaze at the chariot of light, where it was passing between us and the north. Whereupon he said to me : ' If the Twins were in company with that mirror which imparts its light to both hemispheres, thou wouldst see the blazing zodiac revolve still nearer to the Bears<sup>2</sup>, provided it did not quit its wonted track. If thou wouldst conceive how this can be, concentrate thy thoughts, and realize to thyself that Sion and this mountain are so placed on the globe, that they have a common

<sup>1</sup> An angle of  $45^{\circ}$  is meant.

<sup>2</sup> In other words—in June, when the sun is in Gemini, its course, which is marked by the zodiac, would be nearer the north pole.



horizon and are in opposite hemispheres<sup>1</sup>; and consequently thou wilt see, if thy mind gives good heed thereto, that the path wherefrom to his misfortune Phaëthon strayed, must pass on the one side here, when it passes on the other side there<sup>2</sup>. 'In sooth, my Master,' said I, 'never did I see any matter so clearly, as now I understand—with regard to the point which my intellect seemed not to grasp—that the mid circle of the highest heaven that moves, which in a certain science is called the equator, and which ever remains between the sun and winter, for the reason which thou dost state lies here as far away toward the north, as to the Jews it appeared to lie toward the torrid zone. But, if it be thy pleasure, I would fain know how far we have to go, for the Mountain rises higher than mine eyes can soar.' And he to me: 'The nature of this eminence is such, that ever at starting from below it is fatiguing, but in proportion as a man mounts he feels it less. Wherefore, when it shall appear to thee so gentle, that the ascent is as easy as sailing downward with the stream, then shalt thou be at the end of this path; there mayst thou hope to rest thy weariness. No more I reply, but this I know for certain.'

And when he ceased from speaking, a voice close at hand was heard to say: 'Ere that, maybe, thou wilt feel great need of repose.' At the sound of it we both turned, and beheld on our left-hand a huge block of stone, whereof neither he nor I before was ware. Thither we betook ourselves; and at that spot there were folk abiding in the shade behind the stone, in the position a man assumes through

Spirits who  
delayed  
repentance  
through  
indolence;  
Belacqua.

<sup>1</sup> i. e. Jerusalem and the Mountain of Purgatory are antipodal to one another.

<sup>2</sup> At the Mountain of Purgatory the sun's course is seen towards the north, when at Jerusalem it is seen towards the south.

negligence<sup>1</sup>. And one of them, who methought had a weary look, sat clasping his knees, with his face hanging far down between them. 'O sweet my Lord,' said I, 'do look at that one, who wears an air of greater negligence than if sloth were his very sister.' Thereat he turned towards us and gave heed, just moving his face along his thigh, and said: 'Now do thou make the ascent, for thou art strong.' Then I recognized him; and the exhaustion which still somewhat quickened my breathing hindered me not from going to him: and when I reached him he hardly raised his head, while he said: 'Art quite satisfied about the sun driving his chariot on thy left-hand?' His lazy movements and brief words for a moment raised a smile on my lips; anon I began: 'Belacqua<sup>2</sup>, now I am not anxious on thy behalf; but tell me, Why art thou seated just at this spot? Art thou waiting for an escort, or is it merely that thy wonted habit hath once more mastered thee?' And he: 'Brother, what boots the upward journey? For the bird of God, who is seated at the gate<sup>3</sup>, would not suffer me to enter on my pains. Ere that, the heaven must needs revolve round me, while still without the gate, for so long as it did in my lifetime, because I postponed to the last my pious sighs, unless I first have the aid of prayer, such as rises from a heart which lives in grace: as for other prayers, what do they avail, seeing that in heaven they are not heard?' And already the Poet was mounting in front of me, and said: 'Come on now; see how the sun hath reached the meridian, and night, starting

<sup>1</sup> These are the second class of the Negligent, viz. those who delayed their repentance through indolence.

<sup>2</sup> A maker of musical instruments in Florence, who was characterized by his indolence.

<sup>3</sup> The Angel at the gate of Purgatory proper.

from the Ganges' bank, is falling on Morocco with her advancing foot<sup>1</sup>.

## CANTO V. ANTE-PURGATORY

Already I had quitted those shades, and was following my Leader's footsteps, when one exclaimed behind me with outstretched finger: 'See, the sun's rays seem not to shine on the left of the lower of the two, and his demeanour resembles that of a living man.' At the sound of these words I turned round mine eyes, and saw them regarding in astonishment me, me only, and the light which was parted. 'Wherefore is thy mind so occupied,' said my Master, 'that thou slackenest thy speed? Of what importance to thee is what is whispered here? Follow thou me, and let the folk say their say; stand firm as a tower, whose summit never sways for all the blasts of wind: for he in whose mind thought arises in the wake of thought doth ever put out of sight his aim, seeing that the one weakens the other's force.' What could I reply except 'I come'? And as I spake I was tinged a whit with the hue which ever and anon pleads a man's excuse. Meanwhile across the hill-side a little space in front of us there passed a company<sup>2</sup>, who were singing the *Miserere*<sup>3</sup> in alternate verses. When they were ware that my person obstructed the passage of the rays, they exchanged their strain for a long hoarse Oh!

<sup>1</sup> As it was midday in Purgatory, it would be midnight at Jerusalem; and the hemisphere of which Jerusalem was the centre, extending (according to the geography of Dante's time) from the mouth of the Ganges towards the east to Morocco in the west, would be in darkness.

<sup>2</sup> The third class of the Negligent, or those who repented at the moment of a violent death.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. li.

And two of their number ran to meet us in the character of messengers with the inquiry: 'May we know what your condition is?' My Master replied: 'Ye may go your way, and bear word to those who sent you, that this man's body is flesh indeed. If, as I opine, it was at the sight of his shadow that they halted, they have a sufficient answer; let them pay him honour, and that may be to their advantage.' Never saw I ignited vapours cleave the serene heaven at nightfall, or August clouds when the sun declines<sup>1</sup>, so swiftly as those spirits sped on their return upward; and when they reached their goal they turned towards us along with the others, like a troop that comes on at full speed.

Spirits who repented at the time of a violent death.

'This company which hastes towards us is numerous, and they come to ask a favour of thee,' the Poet said; 'proceed therefore without stopping, and listen as thou goest.' 'Thou spirit, who journeyest to reach the realm of bliss with those limbs wherewith thou wast born,' they exclaimed as they approached, 'for a moment check thy steps. Consider whether thou hast ever beheld any one of us, so that thou mayst bear tidings of him to the other world. Ah wherefore dost thou proceed? Wherefore dost thou not halt? We all erewhile met a violent death, and were sinners until our last hour; at that moment a light from heaven admonished us, so that, repentant and forgiving, we departed from life at peace with God, who stirs in our hearts the longing to behold him.' And I: 'Gaze as I will at your faces, I recognize none of you; but if ye desire aught that is in my power, ye spirits predestined to happiness, tell me and I will do it—I swear to you by that bliss, which leads me in its quest from realm to realm, following the footsteps of the Guide whom ye behold.'

<sup>1</sup> The former of the two phenomena here described are shooting stars, the latter summer lightning.



Then one of them began: 'Without thine oath we have confidence, one and all of us, in thy beneficence, provided that inability cancel not thy goodwill. Wherefore I beseech thee, speaking alone before the others, that, if ever thou seest the land which lies between the Romagna and Charles's realm<sup>1</sup>, thou wouldst graciously make request for me in Fano, so that pious prayers may be offered in my behalf, to the end that I may be permitted to cleanse away my grievous sins. That was my birthplace; but the deep wounds, whence issued the blood which was the seat of my life, were inflicted on me in the bosom of Antenor's folk<sup>2</sup>, where I deemed myself more secure: the instigator was the Lord of Este, who harboured wrath against me far beyond the demands of justice. But if, when I reached Oriago, I had fled toward La Mira, I should still be in the land of living men. To the fen country I sped, where the reeds and mire so hampered me that I fell, and there I saw from forth my veins a pool formed on the ground.'

Jacopo del  
Cassero.

Then said another: 'Ah! so may the desire which attracts thee to the lofty Mount be fulfilled—with kindly compassion do thou aid my longing. Of Montefeltro I was; I am Buonconte<sup>3</sup>: neither Giovanna<sup>4</sup> nor any other takes

Buonconte  
da Montefeltro.

<sup>1</sup> The march of Ancona, in which Fano was situated. The speaker is Jacopo del Cassero of Fano, who was murdered at Oriago near Padua by assassins in the employ of Azzo VIII of Este, who had a grudge against him.

<sup>2</sup> The people of Padua, which city was said to have been founded by Antenor.

<sup>3</sup> Buonconte da Montefeltro was son of Guido da Montefeltro, who is introduced among the fraudulent counsellors in *Inf.* xxvii. He was wounded, when fighting on the side of the Ghibellines of Arezzo at the battle of Campaldino in 1289. He here describes the manner of his death, and what followed.

<sup>4</sup> His wife.

thought for me, so that I move in that company with down-cast brow.' And I to him: 'What violence or what mischance led thee astray so far from Campaldino, that thy burial-place was never known?' 'Oh,' he replied, 'at the foot of the Casentino there flows across a stream named Archiano, which rises in the Apennines above the Hermitage. At the point where its name is lost <sup>1</sup> I arrived with a wound in my throat, flying on foot and staining with my blood the plain. There did I lose mine eyesight, and the name of Mary was the last word I uttered; there also I fell, and my body remained alone. The tale I shall tell thee is true; do thou repeat it among the living. God's angel caught me, while he of Hell exclaimed: "Thou denizen of Heaven, wherefore dost thou rob me? Thou on the strength of a miserable tear which deprives me of this man art bearing off the immortal part of him; but with the other part I will deal in other wise." Thou knowest full well how the moist vapour which returns in the form of rain is condensed in the air, so soon as it rises to the point where the cold seizes it. The devil combined with intelligence the malign will which desires naught but evil, and by the power which his nature furnished aroused the mist and wind. Then at the close of day he shrouded in cloud the valley from Prato Magno to the main chain <sup>2</sup>, and caused the sky above to become so dense that the charged air turned to water; the rain descended, and into the watercourses passed whatever of it the earth could not absorb; and when this met the great streams, it plunged with such speed toward the royal river <sup>3</sup> that no power could restrain

<sup>1</sup> i. e. where it joins the Arno.

<sup>2</sup> The upper valley of the Arno, which lies between the range of Prato Magno and the main chain of the Apennines.

<sup>3</sup> The Arno.

it. The wild Archiano at its mouth found my corpse all chill, and flung it into the Arno, loosening from my breast the cross that I made with mine arms when the death-agony mastered me : along its banks and over its bed it whirled me ; anon it covered and swathed me with its spoil.'

'Ah, when thou hast returned to the world, and reposed La Pia. thee after thy long journey,' so after the second spirit spake the third, 'bethink thee of me ; I am La Pia<sup>1</sup>. Siena gave me birth, Maremma unmade me : he is privy to my death, who ere that had placed his ring on my finger in matrimony.'

## CANTO VI. ANTE-PURGATORY

When the game of 'hazard' breaks up, the loser remains behind despondent, going over the throws again, and moodily wins experience : with the other all the company depart ; one goes in front of him, another plucks at his robe behind, a third, walking at his side, recalls himself to his memory. He halts not, but gives heed first to one and then to another ; those to whom he proffers a gift cease to crowd round ; and thus he keeps the throng at bay. So was it with me in that dense multitude, as I turned my face toward them, this way and that, and by means of promises got quit of them. There was the Aretine<sup>2</sup>, who at the savage hands of Ghin di Tacco<sup>3</sup> met his death, and the other who was drowned when pursuing his foes. There with outstretched hands Federico

<sup>1</sup> A lady of Siena, who was put to death by her husband in the district of the Maremma.

<sup>2</sup> Benincasa of Arezzo. He and the others who are here mentioned met violent or sudden deaths, but repented of their sins at the last moment.

<sup>3</sup> A highwayman.

Novello supplicated, and he of Pisa<sup>1</sup>, through whom the good Marzucco's strength of character was revealed. Count Orso I saw; and the spirit who was severed from his body through hatred and envy—so he averred—not for a criminal deed; Pierre de la Brosse<sup>2</sup> I mean: so let the lady of Brabant take heed here, while she still lives, lest on this account she find herself in a worse company.

The efficacy  
of interces-  
sory prayer.

So soon as I had escaped from all those shades, whose only prayer was that another should pray for them, in order that their purification might be hastened, I began: 'Me-thinks in a certain passage, O my Light, thou deniest expressly that prayer can alter a decree of heaven<sup>3</sup>; yet what these spirits request is naught else than this. Can it be, then, that their hope is vain? Or is thy saying not wholly intelligible to me?' And he to me: 'That which I wrote is clear, and their hope is not fallacious, if with a sound mind it be carefully regarded; for the height of God's judgement is not lowered, seeing that the fire of love<sup>4</sup> in a moment fulfils the satisfaction required from those who here abide: and in the instance where I laid down this principle that which was lacking was not compensated by prayer, because the prayer could not reach the ears of God<sup>5</sup>. Nevertheless on a question so profound rest not assured unless she instruct

<sup>1</sup> Farinata, son of Marzucco degli Scornigiani of Pisa. Marzucco's strength of character was shown by his expressing his willingness to be reconciled to his son's murderer, instead of calling for vengeance on him.

<sup>2</sup> He was chamberlain of Philip III of France. He was put to death on a charge of treason brought against him by his enemies, one of whom was Philip's queen, Mary of Brabant.

<sup>3</sup> The passage is *Aen.* vi. 376 'Desine fata deum flecti sperare precando.'

<sup>4</sup> i. e. the love involved in intercessory prayer.

<sup>5</sup> Palinurus, whose case is here referred to, was a heathen, and therefore prayers for him were unavailing.



thee who will be a light to reveal the truth to thy mind. Is this obscure to thee? 'Tis Beatrice I mean: thou wilt see her above, on the summit of this Mountain, smiling and blissful.' And I: 'My Lord, let us hasten our steps: I am not weary now, as erewhile I was; and see how already the hill casts a shadow.' 'We will make what further progress we can to-day,' he replied; 'but the state of the case is other than thou imaginest. Ere thou reachest the summit thou wilt witness the return of him<sup>1</sup> who now is hidden by the hillside, so that thou dost not intercept his rays. But see there a spirit, who, stationed all alone, is looking towards us; he will point out to us the speediest way.

We approached him; O Lombard soul, how proud and Sordello. disdainful was thine attitude, how slow and dignified the movement of thine eyes! He spake not a word to us, but suffered us to go our way, merely watching us, as a couchant lion doth. Yet Virgil went up to him with the request that he should show us the best route upward, whereupon, without replying to his question, he inquired concerning our country and manner of life. Then my kind Leader thus began: 'Mantua . . .' And the shade, erst so reserved, rose toward him from his former station, exclaiming: 'O Mantuan, I am Sordello<sup>2</sup> thy fellow citizen'; and they embraced each other.

Ah! servile Italy, abode of woe, ship without pilot in a wild tempest, no mistress of provinces but house of ill fame! So eager was that noble spirit, merely at the sweet name of his home, to welcome there his compatriot; and now within thy borders thy living sons are not exempt from war, but those molest one another who are enclosed by a single wall and moat. Make search, ill-fated one, around thy sea-

The want of patriotism in the Italian cities.

<sup>1</sup> The sun.

<sup>2</sup> The troubadour poet of the thirteenth century.

coasts, and then regard thy bosom, to see whether any part of thee is blest with peace. What avails it that Justinian refitted thy bridle, if the saddle is void<sup>1</sup>? Were it not for that, the discredit would be less. Ye folk, whose duty it is to be religious, and to suffer Caesar to occupy the saddle<sup>2</sup>, if ye read aright God's appointment for you, mark how vicious this beast hath become through not being chastised by the spur, since ye have put your hand to the headstall. O German Albert<sup>3</sup>, who neglectest her that hath grown wild and untamable, while thou oughtest to bestride her saddlebow, may a righteous judgement fall from the stars upon thy life, and may it be strange and manifest, so that thy successor<sup>4</sup> may be seized with fear thereat; for that thou and thy father<sup>5</sup>, diverted by your greed of those transalpine lands, have suffered the garden of the empire to run to waste. Come and see the Montagues and Capulets, the Monaldi and Filippeschi, thou neglectful man, the former already in low estate, the latter mistrustful. Come, hard-hearted one, come, and see the distress of thy nobility, and heal their wrongs, and thou wilt see how safe is Santafiora<sup>6</sup>. Come and see thy Rome lamenting in her desolate widowhood, while day and night she cries: 'My Caesar, why dost thou not abide with me?' Come and see how much love is lost between thy people; or, if no pity for us affects thee, come and feel shame at thine own repute. And if my words are not too

<sup>1</sup> Justinian's reform of the laws is rendered unavailing through the neglect of the sovereign power of the Empire.

<sup>2</sup> The ecclesiastics are meant, who had usurped the temporal power.

<sup>3</sup> Emperor from 1298 to 1308.

<sup>4</sup> Henry of Luxemburg.

<sup>5</sup> The emperor Rudolf.

<sup>6</sup> This is ironical; the misfortunes of the Counts of Santafiora are alluded to.

bold, thou highest Jove who wast crucified for us on earth, are thy just eyes averted from us? Or art thou thus in the depths of thy counsel preparing the way for some blessing, which is wholly excluded from our range of vision? For the cities of Italy teem with tyrants, and every peasant churl who plays the partisan becomes a Marcellus<sup>1</sup>. My Florence, well mayst thou be content with this digression, which affects thee not, thanks to thy folk who are so ready with pleas. Many peoples have justice at heart, but are slow to speak thereof, lest its name escape from them unadvisedly; but thy people have it on their very lips. Many decline the burden of the common weal, but thy people eagerly reply unbidden, exclaiming: 'I am girding myself for the task.' Rejoice then, for thou hast good cause, rich, peaceful, prudent as thou art; whether I speak the truth the result declares. Athens and Lacedaemon, who enacted the laws of old and were so well-governed, gave but a feeble hint of good administration in comparison of thee, who makest ordinances of so fine a texture, that the threads thou spinnest in October last not till mid-November. How many times within thy memory hast thou changed thy laws, thy currency, thine officers and customs, and renewed thy members! And if thou rememberest aright and canst perceive the truth, thou wilt see that thou art like the sickly dame, who finds no rest on her bed of down, but shifts her posture to alleviate her pain.

## CANTO VII. ANTE-PURGATORY

When those glad and honourable greetings had been three Virgil times and more renewed, Sordello drew back, and said: <sup>reveals</sup> 'Who are ye?' 'Before the souls that are worthy to ascend <sup>himself to</sup> Sordello.

<sup>1</sup> i. e. a demagogue; 'Marcellus loquax,' Lucan, *Phars.* i. 313.

to God turned their steps toward this Mountain, my bones were interred by Octavianus' orders. I am Virgil; and for no other sin was I excluded from heaven than want of faith': such was the answer which my Leader then returned. As is the man who on a sudden sees before him an object which excites his wonder, who believes, yet disbelieves, saying: 'It is; it cannot be'; such did he seem; and then with downcast eyes and humble mien he returned towards him, and embraced him where the inferior clasps his superior. 'O glory of the Latins,' he said, 'through whom our language showed what it could achieve, O eternal honour of my birth-place, what merit or what grace reveals thee to me? If I am meet to hear thy words, tell me if thou comest from Hell, and from what Circle thereof.' 'Through all the Circles of the realm of woe,' he replied to him, 'I have come hither; a heaven-sent influence moved me, and in the strength of it I come. Not through committed sin but by default I have lost the sight of the Sun on high for whom thou longest, and who all too late became known to me. A place there is below, where no torment, but only darkness, afflicts the soul; where the laments are not cries of woe, but merely sighs: there I abide with the innocent little ones, on whom death closed his fangs ere they were freed from human sin. There I abide with those who put not on the three saintly virtues<sup>1</sup>, but without sin knew all the others, and unfailingly observed them. But direct us, if thou mayst and knowest the way, so that we may more quickly reach the point where Purgatory hath its proper commencement.'

He replied: 'No fixed station is assigned to us; I have licence to walk upward and around; so far as I may I will accompany thee as thy guide. But see already how the day

<sup>1</sup> Faith, hope and charity.



is declining, and in the night-time it is impossible to ascend; wherefore it is well to take thought for a pleasant resting-place. Here on our right there are spirits in seclusion; with thy consent I will conduct thee to them, and with their acquaintance thou wilt not fail to be delighted.' 'How so?' was the reply: 'if one wished to ascend by night, would any hinder him, or would inability prevent him?' Then the good Sordello drew his finger along upon the earth, saying: 'See, after sunset thou couldst not even cross this line; not because aught else than the darkness of night impedes the ascent; it is that which hampers the will through want of power. 'Tis true, during the dark hours a man might retrace his steps downward, and traverse the hillside in devious course, while the horizon excludes the day.' Thereupon, as if in wonder, my Lord said: 'Conduct us then to the spot, where thou sayest we may have enjoyment while we rest.' We had not proceeded far from that point, when I was ware of a depression in the Mountain<sup>1</sup>, such as here on earth the valleys form. 'Thither will we repair,' said that shade, 'where the hillside retires, and there will we await the break of day.' A winding path there was, neither steep nor yet level, which led us to the side of the dell, where its rim is diminished to less than half its depth. Gold and fine silver, cochineal and white lead, Indian wood with clear harmonious tints, emerald undimmed at the moment when it is flaked, if contrasted with the grass and flowers within that dale, would each of them be surpassed in hue, even as the less is surpassed by the greater. There nature had not only used colour, but from the sweetness of a thousand odours pro-

<sup>1</sup> The Valletta dei Principi, where are the fourth class of the Negligent, viz. kings and princes, who deferred their repentance owing to the cares of state.

duced a perfume all unknown and subtly blended. There saw I seated on the verdure and the flowers spirits singing *Salve Regina*<sup>1</sup>, who, owing to the form of the valley, were not visible from without.

The spirits  
of the  
illustrious  
sovereigns.

‘Until the sun who is sinking attains his rest’—thus began the Mantuan who had directed us—‘desire not that I should lead you among that company. From this ridge ye will better observe the mien and the countenances of them all, than if ye were received in their midst in the level below. He that occupies the highest seat, and wears the look of having neglected his rightful duty, nor moves his lips in concert with the others’ songs, was the emperor Rudolf, who had it in his power to heal the wounds whereby Italy hath been done to death, so that her recovery by another<sup>2</sup> tarries long. The other, who, to judge from his looks, is consoling him, was ruler of the land<sup>3</sup> where rises the stream which the Moldau bears into the Elbe, and the Elbe into the sea: Ottocar was his name; and he in swaddling clothes was a far better man than is Wenceslaus his son in his maturity, pampered as he is by luxury and ease. And he of the small nose<sup>4</sup>, whom we see earnestly conversing with the one who is so benign in look<sup>5</sup>, died in flight dishonouring the *fleur-de-lis*; mark how he smites his breast. Observe too the other, who, as he sighs, hath reposed his cheek on the palm of his hand. Father and father-in-law are they to the curse of France<sup>6</sup>;

<sup>1</sup> The Compline Hymn to the Virgin.

<sup>2</sup> Henry of Luxemburg, whose possible advent Dante here anticipates.

<sup>3</sup> Bohemia.

<sup>4</sup> Philip the Bold of France; he invaded Catalonia in a war with Peter III of Aragon, but was forced to retreat, and died at Perpignan.

<sup>5</sup> Henry the Fat of Navarre.

<sup>6</sup> Philip the Fair, son of Philip the Bold, who married the daughter of Henry of Navarre.

they are acquainted with his foul and vicious life, and thence arises the pain which wounds them so. That one who seems so large of limb <sup>1</sup>, and sings in concert with him of the manly nose <sup>2</sup>, wore round his loins the girdle of all worth. And had the youth <sup>3</sup> who sits behind him continued to reign in his stead, worth would have rightly been transmitted from occupant to occupant—a thing which cannot be said of his other heirs. James and Frederic hold his dominions <sup>4</sup>, but neither possesses aught of the better heritage. Rarely among men is integrity reproduced in the branches; and this is the will of the Giver, in order that it may be regarded as his gift. To him of the manly nose withal my remarks apply, no less than to the other, even Peter, who is singing with him; by reason whereof Apulia and Provence are now lamenting <sup>5</sup>. The plant is as inferior to the seed from which it sprang, as Constance exceeds Beatrice and Margaret in the pride she still feels for her husband <sup>6</sup>. Behold the king of innocent life, who sits there alone, Henry of England <sup>7</sup>; he in his branches hath more worthy issue <sup>8</sup>. He that is seated on the ground below the others and gazes upward, is the Marquis William <sup>9</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> Peter III of Aragon.

<sup>2</sup> Charles I of Anjou.

<sup>3</sup> Alfonso, eldest son and successor of Peter III, who died early.

<sup>4</sup> James became king of Aragon, and Frederic king of Sicily.

<sup>5</sup> The remarks about the degeneracy of sons apply to Charles I of Anjou because of the misgovernment of his son, Charles II of Anjou, who was king of Naples and count of Provence.

<sup>6</sup> Constance here is the wife of Peter of Aragon, while Beatrice and Margaret are the wives of Charles I of Anjou and his brother Louis IX of France. The meaning of the passage then is:—Charles II is as inferior to Charles I, as Charles I and Louis IX are to Peter III.

<sup>7</sup> Henry III.

<sup>8</sup> Edward I.

<sup>9</sup> William, marquis of Montferrat and Canavese. When he marched against Alessandria in 1290, he was made prisoner and died in captivity;

on whose account Alessandria and its war cause Monferrat and Canavese to lament.'

## CANTO VIII. ANTE-PURGATORY

The even-  
ing hour.

'Twas now the hour which turns homeward the longings of those who sail the sea, and softens their hearts, what day they have bidden adieu to their beloved friends; and stirs within the pilgrim fresh on his way a pang of love, when he hears from afar a bell<sup>1</sup>, that seems to lament the dying day; and I at that hour began to lose the sense of hearing, and to gaze at one of the spirits, that had arisen, and with his hand was pleading for attention. He clasped and uplifted his two palms, looking steadfastly toward the east, as if he said to God: 'For Thee alone I care.' 'Before the ending of the day'<sup>2</sup> issued from his lips with such devotion and notes so sweet, that it entranced me with rapture: anon the others devoutly in dulcet tones repeated after him the entire hymn with their eyes fixed on the spheres above.

The  
guardian  
Angels.

Look keenly here, Reader, to perceive the truth; for verily now the veil is so fine-spun, that it is easy to penetrate the mystery<sup>3</sup>. I saw thereafter that noble host look upward in silence, pale and humble, as it were in expectation; and

and when his son, Giovanni, advanced against Alessandria to avenge him, he ended by losing part of his dominions.

<sup>1</sup> The Angelus bell.

<sup>2</sup> This is the commencement of the familiar English evening hymn, which is a translation of the Latin *Te lucis ante terminum*.

<sup>3</sup> What follows is an acted parable, the Flowery Valley representing the splendour of the life of kings, the serpent the temptations to which they are exposed, the angels the spiritual influences which succour them.



two angels I saw come forth from on high and descend, bearing two flaming swords, blunted and reft of their points. Their raiment was green as young leaves just opened, and was smitten and waved by green wings, as it trailed behind them. The one stationed himself close above us, the other alighted on the opposite ridge, so that the folk were in the space between them. The whiteness of their heads I clearly distinguished, but in looking at their faces the eye was dazed, like a faculty overpowered by excessive strain. 'They come both of them from Mary's bosom,' Sordello said, 'to guard the valley, by reason of the serpent that will instantly arrive.' Whereupon, as I knew not what its route would be, I turned me round, and shivering with fear drew close to the shoulders of my trusty guide. And Sordello recommenced: 'Let us now go down into the midst of the mighty shades, and we will converse with them: the sight of you will be well-pleasing to them.'

Methinks I had descended but three paces when I reached the bottom, and I perceived one who was absorbed in looking at me, as if he would fain recognize me. It was the time of day when the atmosphere was growing dark, yet not so much as to prevent its revealing between his eyes and mine what previously it concealed. He advanced toward me, and I toward him; O noble Judge Nino<sup>1</sup>, how happy was I to find that thou wert not in the number of the malefactors. No fair words of greeting were left unsaid between us; anon he inquired: 'How long time is it since thou camest to the Mountain's foot across the distant waters?' 'Oh!' said I, 'this morning through the abodes of woe I came, and I am in my first life, albeit by this journey I am winning the other.'

<sup>1</sup> Nino Visconti of Pisa, who was governor or judge of the province of Gallura in Sardinia.

And no sooner was mine answer heard, than Sordello and he shrank backward, like folk who are suddenly bewildered. The one turned toward Virgil, the other to a spirit that was seated there, exclaiming: 'Rise, Conrad<sup>1</sup>; come and behold what God of his grace hath vouchsafed.' Then addressing me: 'By that special gratitude which thou owest to Him, who so conceals His primary motive that it cannot be forded, I pray thee, when thou art on the further side of the wide waters, bid my Giovanna<sup>2</sup> make supplication for me in that quarter, where to innocent souls a reply is given. Her mother, I ween, loves me no longer since she put off her white weeds, for which hereafter in her sad estate she is doomed to long<sup>3</sup>. From her example it is full easily perceived how brief a space the fire of love endures in woman, if it be not oft enkindled by the eye or touch. The viper which bids the Milanese encamp<sup>4</sup> will not show so fair on her tomb as the cock of Gallura would have done.' Thus spake he, the while his countenance bore the imprint of righteous zeal, such as burns in the heart without excess.

The  
serpent.

My eager eyes were fixed on the heavens, at the point where the stars revolve most slowly, like a wheel where it is nearest the axle. And my Leader said: 'My son, at what art thou gazing aloft?' And I to him: 'At those three luminaries<sup>5</sup>, wherewith the hither pole is all afire.' And he

<sup>1</sup> Conrad Malaspina.

<sup>2</sup> His daughter, who was still a girl.

<sup>3</sup> After Nino's death she married Galeazzo Visconti of Milan, and two years after this he was expelled from that city.

<sup>4</sup> The viper was the crest of the Visconti. Before the Milanese army pitched their tents, the flag which bore it had to be planted in the ground.

<sup>5</sup> These three stars symbolize the three Christian virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity, in like manner as the four represent the cardinal virtues.

to me: 'The four bright stars which thou sawest this morning are low down yonder, and these have risen in their place.' As he uttered these words, Sordello drew him towards himself, saying: 'Lo! there is our adversary'; and pointed with his finger that he should look that way. On the undefended side of the little valley there was a snake, haply the one which presented Eve with the bitter food. Through the grass and flowers the evil serpent came on, turning round its head from time to time to its back, and licking itself like a beast that sleeks its skin. I saw not, and therefore I cannot describe, the first movements of the celestial hawks, but after they had started I beheld them both distinctly. The serpent, when he was ware that the green wings were cleaving the air, took to flight, and the angels, turning round, flew upward again to their stations in equal course.

The shade who at the Judge's call had drawn nigh to him, throughout that assault did not for a moment remove his eyes from me. 'So may the lamp which leads thee on high find in thy free will so much wax as is required for thee to reach the enamelled summit<sup>1</sup>,' he began: 'if thou hast trustworthy intelligence of Valdimacra<sup>2</sup> or its neighbourhood, tell it to me, for once I was in honour there. Conrad Malaspina I was called; I am not the elder of that name, but a descendant of his: I expended on my relations that love which here is purified.' 'Oh!' said I to him, 'in your land I have never been; but in what part of Europe can a man dwell, where they are not well known? The fame

Corrado  
Malaspina.

<sup>1</sup> The Terrestrial Paradise, which was on the summit of the Mountain of Purgatory.

<sup>2</sup> A district of the Lunigiana (at the foot of the Apennines behind Spezia), which was ruled by the Malaspina family.

which dignifies your house celebrates its grandees and the country withal, so that strangers are acquainted therewith. And I swear to you (so may I reach the summit of this Mountain), that your honoured race forfeits not the meed of fame which it hath won for its purse and for its sword. From nature and from practice it hath such prerogative, that albeit the world is misguided by its guilty head<sup>1</sup>, it alone walks straight forward, despising the way of error.' And he: 'Now go thy way, for the sun shall not rest seven times on the bed which the Ram covers and bestrides with all his four feet<sup>2</sup>, ere this favourable view will be imprinted deeply on thy mind by a force more powerful than others' testimony<sup>3</sup>, if the course of God's judgements be not stayed.'

## CANTO IX. THE GATE OF PURGATORY

Dante's  
anticipatory  
dream.

The concubine of Tithonus old<sup>4</sup> was already brightening on her eastern balcony, as she quitted the embraces of her fond lover; her brow was gleaming with jewels, set in the figure of that chill animal which strikes the folk with its tail<sup>5</sup>; and night in the spot where we were had accomplished two of the stages by which she rises, and the third was now drooping its wings<sup>6</sup>: when I, who was bearing my portion of

<sup>1</sup> The worldly popes.

<sup>2</sup> I. e. seven years shall not pass.

<sup>3</sup> This is a prophecy of Dante's hospitable entertainment by the Malaspina in 1306.

<sup>4</sup> The Lunar Aurora—i. e. the lightening of the eastern sky which precedes the rising of the moon—which is here intended, is spoken of as the concubine of Tithonus, in the same way as the Solar Aurora is called his wife.

<sup>5</sup> The constellation of Scorpio.

<sup>6</sup> The stages by which night rises are the hours between sunset and midnight, and the time here intended is about 8.45 p.m.



Adam's heritage, overcome by sleep, reclined me on the grass where all five of us were already seated. At the hour when the swallow at the approach of morn commences her sad lays, haply in memory of her early sorrows <sup>1</sup>, and when our mind, being more estranged from the flesh and less captive to its imaginations, is wellnigh prophetic in its visions, methought in a dream <sup>2</sup> I saw an eagle with feathers of gold poised in mid-air, with wings extended and prepared to swoop; and I fancied I was at the place where Ganymede forsook his friends, when he was carried off to the supreme consistory. I reflected thus: 'Maybe the eagle from habit strikes its prey only in this place, and haply it disdains to bear it off on high in its claws from elsewhere.' Anon it seemed to me that after wheeling for a space it descended, terrible as a thunderbolt, and snatched me up even to the region of fire <sup>3</sup>. There methought both it and I were aflame, and so scorching was the fancied conflagration that perforce my sleep was broken.

Not otherwise did Achilles start, and move around his awakened eyes, not knowing where he was—what time his mother bore him off from Chiron asleep in her arms to Scyros, whence afterward the Greeks <sup>4</sup> removed him—than I started, so soon as sleep passed away from before my face; and I became deadly pale, like one who is chilled by panic fear. By my side was my Comforter alone, and already more than

St. Lucy  
bears him  
to the  
entrance of  
Purgatory.

<sup>1</sup> The fabled sorrows of Philomela, whom Dante identifies with the swallow.

<sup>2</sup> Ganymede was carried off by an eagle from the summit of Mount Ida, in order that he might become cup-bearer to the conclave of the Gods. The dream in which Dante beholds this symbolizes his being transported to the gate of Purgatory by the aid of St. Lucy.

<sup>3</sup> The sphere which was supposed to intervene between our atmosphere and the moon.

<sup>4</sup> Ulysses and Diomedes; cp. *Inf.* xxvi. 61, 62.

two hours the sun had risen, and my face was turned toward the sea. 'Fear not,' said my Lord; 'be of good cheer, we have reached a favourable spot; relax not, but put forth, all thine energy. Thou art now arrived at Purgatory: behold there the ridge of rock which encloses it around; behold the entrance at the point where it appears to be cleft. But now, in the dawning which precedes the day, when thy spirit was asleep within thee on the flowers wherewith the ground below is adorned, there came a lady, who said: "I am Lucia<sup>1</sup>: suffer me to take this sleeper, so shall I aid him in prosecuting his journey." Sordello and the other noble spirits<sup>2</sup> remained behind; she took thee up, and so soon as it was day wended her way upward, and I followed in her footsteps. Here she laid thee down; and first her beauteous eyes indicated to me that open entrance; anon she and thy sleep vanished together.' Even as one who, when doubting, is reassured, and exchanges his fear for confidence, when once the truth is revealed to him, so did I change; and so soon as my Leader saw that my trouble was relieved, he advanced over the ridge, and I followed him toward the higher ground.

The Angel  
at the gate.

Reader, thou dost not fail to mark how my subject rises; be not surprised then if I fortify it with greater art. As we drew nigh, our point of view was such that, where first I perceived a gap, resembling a cleft which rives a wall, I beheld a gate, and below it three steps of different colours leading to it, and a door-keeper, who as yet spake no word. And as this was more and more revealed to mine eye, I saw that he was seated on the topmost step, in aspect such that I could not endure the sight; and in his hand he bare a drawn sword,

<sup>1</sup> Dante's patron saint, who succoured him at the time of his conversion; cp. *Inf.* ii. 97, 98.

<sup>2</sup> Nino and Conrad.

which reflected the sunlight in our direction so keenly, that I turned mine eyes often towards it in vain. 'Tell me from where ye stand,' he commenced, 'What is your desire? Where is your escort? Beware lest the ascent be to your bane.' 'A heavenly dame, well versed in these mysteries,' my Master replied to him, 'said to us but now: "Go thitherward, there is the gate."' 'And may she further your progress toward happiness,' began afresh the courteous porter; 'advance then toward our steps.'

The first stair<sup>1</sup>, which we now reached, was of white marble so smooth and clear, that my very image was reflected in it. The second, which was darker than purple-black, was formed of a rugged burnt rock, cracked throughout its whole length and breadth. The third, which lies ponderously above, looked to me like porphyry, as fiery-red as blood spurting from a vein. On this the Angel of God had planted both his feet, as he sat on the threshold, which appeared to me to be of adamant. Up the three steps with my goodwill my Leader drew me, saying: 'Beseech him humbly to unfasten the lock.' I cast myself in reverence at his holy feet, and prayed him of his mercy to open to me; but first I smote myself three times on the breast. With the point of his sword he inscribed seven P's<sup>2</sup> on my forehead, saying: 'See thou cleanse these wounds when thou art within.' Ashes or earth dug dry from the ground would correspond in colour with his raiment, and from beneath this he drew forth two keys<sup>3</sup>.

The three stairs; the seven P's; the two keys.

<sup>1</sup> The three stairs by which the gate of Purgatory is approached represent allegorically the three stages of penitence. The first by its clear colour symbolizes candour in confession; the second by its broken surface contrition of heart; the third by its bright red colour ardent love.

<sup>2</sup> These signify the seven deadly sins.

<sup>3</sup> The Angel represents the power of absolution possessed by the Church, and the office of the priest-confessor. The golden key is the

One was of gold and the other of silver; first with the white, and afterward with the yellow key he plied the gate in such wise as to satisfy my wishes. 'Whenever either of these keys works amiss,' said he to us, 'so that it turns not aright in the key-hole, this entrance doth not open. The one is the more precious, but the other demands exceeding great skill and insight ere it unlocks, for it is that which disentangles the knot. From Peter I received them; and he bade me err rather in opening the gate than in keeping it closed, provided that the folk prostrate themselves at my feet.' Anon he thrust open the door of the consecrated gate, saying: 'Enter; but be it known to you, that whoso looks back returns and is cast forth.'

Dante and  
Virgil are  
admitted.

And when the mighty pivots of that sacred door, resonant with their metal, turned in their sockets, Tarpeia roared not so loudly, nor showed itself so discordant, when the good Metellus was removed from it, whereby thereafter it remained impoverished<sup>1</sup>. I turned away to listen to the commencement of a burst of sound, and methought I heard *Te Deum laudamus*<sup>2</sup> sung in combination with that harmony. The impression produced on me by what met mine ear was even such as is made when singers are accompanied by instruments, so that the words are heard intermittently.

exercise of the former of these two functions, the silver that of the latter. They are the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>1</sup> The grating of the pivots is compared to that of the hinges of the gate of the temple of Saturn, which was echoed by the Tarpeian rock, when, on the occasion of the entrance of Julius Caesar with the object of obtaining possession of the treasures which it contained, the tribune Metellus who opposed him was forcibly removed. Cp. Lucan, iii. 114-68.

<sup>2</sup> These words were sung by the spirits to celebrate the admission of those newly arrived.



# CANTO X. THE FIRST CORNICE

So soon as we were within the threshold of the gate, which the perverted affection of men's souls, by making the wrong way to appear right, causes to be disused, I perceived by the sound that it was closed again; and had I turned mine eyes towards it, what excuse could have counterbalanced the transgression? We ascended through a cleft in the rock, which undulated from side to side<sup>1</sup>, like a wave which approaches and withdraws. 'Here we must needs exercise a little skill,' began my Leader, 'in keeping close, now in this direction, now in that, to the side of the rock which retires.' And this caused our footsteps to be so infrequent, that the moon's decreasing disk reached once more its bed to repose there afresh, ere we emerged from that needle's eye<sup>2</sup>. But when we were free in the open space above, where the Mountain shrinks inward, I for my part weary, and both of us uncertain of our way, we halted on a level spot, more desolate than a desert road. From its edge, where it borders on the void, to the foot of the lofty rock-wall which rises sheer, the space would be measured by a human body thrice told; and as far as mine eye could wing its flight, now to the left, now to the right side, such did the character of this Cornice appear to me.

The first  
Cornice,  
of pride.

Our steps had not yet begun to traverse it, when I noted that that wall, which, being perpendicular, admitted not of being scaled, throughout its circuit was composed of white marble, so finely decorated with carvings, that, I will not say Polycletus<sup>3</sup>, but Nature herself in its presence would be put

Examples of  
humility;  
Mary and  
the Angel.

<sup>1</sup> i. e. formed zigzags.

<sup>2</sup> The time of day intended is from 9 to 9.30 a.m.

<sup>3</sup> The famous Greek sculptor.

to shame. The Angel <sup>1</sup> who came to earth bearing the proclamation of that peace, which for long years had been desired with weeping, whereby the long interdict of heaven was raised, was seen in front of us with a loving mien, so faithfully engraven that it resembled not a mute figure. One would have sworn that he said 'Hail,' seeing that she who turned the key to open to us the highest love was imaged there; and in her looks the words 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord' were expressed as clearly as the figure on a seal is stamped on wax.

David  
dancing  
before the  
Ark.

'Keep not thy mind fixed on one spot,' said my kind Master, who had me on that side of him on which men's hearts are placed; whereupon I turned my face, and saw beyond Mary, in the direction in which my Conductor was standing, another story incised on the rock: wherefore I passed Virgil and came close to it, that it might be well in view to mine eyes. There on the very marble was carved the car with the oxen drawing the sacred ark <sup>2</sup>, by reason whereof men shrink from an office not entrusted to them <sup>3</sup>. In front of it was seen a multitude of folk, who, being divided into seven choirs, caused one of my senses to say 'they are not singing,' another 'they are <sup>4</sup>.' Similarly at the smoke of the incense which was there portrayed the eyes and the nose contradicted one another. There in front of the sacred vessel went the humble Psalmist, high-girt and bounding in the dance, and in so doing he was more and less than king <sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Gabriel, the Angel of the Annunciation.

<sup>2</sup> The story is given in 2 Sam. vi.

<sup>3</sup> The reference is to the death of Uzzah; 2 Sam. vi. 7.

<sup>4</sup> The two senses here are the ears and the eyes.

<sup>5</sup> More than king, because he was performing a priestly function; less than king, because he seemed to be debasing himself.

Over against him Michal was represented at the window of a great palace, with a look of wonder, like a sad indignant dame.

I moved onward from where I stood, to examine close at hand another tale, which I saw gleaming on the further side of Michal. There was figured the noble deed of renown of the Roman sovereign, whose worth incited Gregory to his mighty triumph<sup>1</sup>—the emperor Trajan I mean; and at his bridle was a poor widow, in attitude of lamentation and weeping. The space around him appeared thronged and crowded with knights, and over his head the eagles on their golden ground seemed waving in the wind. In the midst of all these the sufferer appeared to be saying: 'My Lord, avenge me for my son's death, whereby I am cut to the heart.' And he seemed to reply to her: 'Wait now until my return.' And she, like one impatient through grief: 'What if thou dost not return?' Then he: 'My successor will do it for thee.' And she: 'What will another's good deeds avail thee, if thou dost neglect thine own?' Whereupon he replied: 'Now take comfort; for I am bound to fulfill my duty ere I start; justice ordains it, and pity holds me back.' He in whose eyes nothing is new created this visible converse, which is strange to us because on earth the like of it is not found.

While I was rejoicing in the sight of the examples of great humility thus portrayed, which for their artificer's sake are precious to behold, in low tones the Poet said: 'See, on this side, though their pace is slow, there come a multitude of folk; they will direct us toward the upper Cornices.' Mine eyes, which were intent on gazing, were not slow in turning

Trajan and  
the poor  
widow.

The spirits  
of the  
proud.

<sup>1</sup> Pope Gregory the Great was believed to have rescued the soul of Trajan from Hell.

toward him, to see an unwonted sight such as they love. I would not, Reader, that thou shouldst fail of good resolution, through hearing how God wills that the debt to Him should be paid. Give no heed to the nature of the suffering; bethink thee of what is to follow; bethink thee, that at the worst it cannot continue beyond the final sentence. 'Master,' I began, 'that which I see moving towards us doth not appear to me to be human forms, and what they are I know not, so confused is my sight of them<sup>1</sup>.' And he to me: 'The oppressiveness of their torment makes them crouch to earth, so that mine eyes too at first had a hard struggle to distinguish them. But look fixedly in that direction, and discriminate by thy sight what comes on beneath those stones; now thou canst see how each one beats his breast.' Ah! ye proud Christians, ye sad and weary souls, who being weak in your mental vision, have confidence in your backsliding steps; do ye not comprehend that we are worms, created to form the angelic butterfly, which wings its way unveiled toward the presence of its Judge? Wherefore is your spirit so overweening, seeing that ye are naught else than imperfect insects like the undeveloped worm?

Their heavy  
burdens.

As, to support a vault or roof, at times a figure that serves for a corbel is seen to approach its knees to its breast, whereby from imaginary pain real distress is begotten in the beholder; such was the appearance of those spirits, when I carefully regarded them. True it is, that according as the weight on their backs was heavier or lighter, they were more or less contracted; and the most patient in mien seemed to say with tears: 'No longer can I endure it.'

<sup>1</sup> The spirits which are expiating the sin of pride, are depressed by the weight of heavy burdens.



CANTO XI. THE FIRST CORNICE

‘Our Father, which art in heaven, not as being finite, but by reason of the greater love thou hast for thy first creations on high, praised be thy name and thy might by every creature, as it is fitting to render thanks to thy sweet effluence. May the peace of thy kingdom come to us, for of ourselves even with our fullest powers we cannot attain it, if it doth not come. As thine angels, singing Hosanna, make offering of their wills to thee, so may men make offering of theirs. Give us this day our daily manna, without which in journeying through this wild desert he that presses onward most doth but retrace his steps. And as we forgive all men for the wrongs that we have suffered, do thou too in mercy forgive us and regard not our deserts. Our force of will, which gives way so easily, put not thou to the proof against the old adversary, but deliver it from him, who goads it so. This last petition, dear Lord, we now make, not for ourselves, for we need it not, but for those whom we have left behind us.’ Thus did those spirits, praying for good speed for themselves and us, move forward beneath the weight, which resembles that which at times we feel in dreams; tormented all of them in different degrees and weary, in circular course over the first Cornice, cleansing themselves from the pollutions of the world. If good words are evermore uttered there in our behalf, what adequate return can be made here in words or deeds by those whose wills spring from a healthy root? Verily it is a duty to aid them to wash away the stains which they bore hence, so that pure and light they may pass forth unto the starry spheres.

‘I pray you—so may He that is just and merciful soon unburden you, that ye may have the power to move your

The spirits  
recite a  
paraphrase  
of the  
Lord's  
Prayer.

Omberto  
Aldo-  
brandesco.

wings, so that they may raise you in accordance with your desires—show us on which side is the shortest approach to the stairway, and if there be more than one passage, point out to us the least precipitous; for he who accompanies me, by reason of the burden of Adam's flesh which he wears, is chary, though against his will, of ascending.' The words wherewith they replied to these which had been uttered by my Guide, did not clearly reveal from whom they came; but they ran thus: 'Come with us toward the right along the edge, and ye will find the pass which a living man may scale. And were I not hampered by the stone which subdues my proud neck, so that I must perforce bend down my face, I would regard this one who is still alive but gives no name, to see whether I recognize him, and to arouse his compassion for this my load. An Italian I was, the son of a great Tuscan; Guglielmo Aldobrandesco was my father: I know not if his name ever reached your ears. The ancient blood and gallant deeds of my ancestors made me so overbearing, that, forgetting our common mother, I treated all men with contempt so deep that it caused my death, as the Sienese are aware, and every child in Compagnatico<sup>1</sup>. I am Umberto; and not of my ruin only was pride the cause, for it hath dragged all my relations into disaster along with it. And by reason hereof, until satisfaction be made to God, I must needs support this burden here among the dead, because among the living I did not so.'

Oderisi  
d'Agobbio.

As I listened I bent my face downward; and one of them (not he who spake) turned him beneath the weight which hampered his movements, and saw me and recognized me and called me, the while he kept his eyes painfully fixed on me, as I walked in a crouching posture in their company. 'Oh!'

<sup>1</sup> He was murdered in his castle of Compagnatico by emissaries of the Sienese.

said I to him, 'art not thou Oderisi, the pride of Agobbio<sup>1</sup>, and the pride of that art which in Paris is called illuminating?' 'Brother,' said he, 'fairer are the pages which Franco Bolognese's pencil adorns; he now wins men's praise in full, I but in part. True, I should not have been so gracious in my lifetime, by reason of the vehement desire of pre-eminence, for which my heart yearned. It is for such pride that the penalty here is paid; nor should I yet be here, were it not that while it was still in my power to sin I turned to God. Alas for the vainglory of human talents! for how brief a space doth verdure remain on its summit, if it be not succeeded by an age of dullness! In painting Cimabue<sup>2</sup> thought he held the field, and now Giotto hath the cry, so that the other's fame is overcast. Even so in language the one Guido hath eclipsed the other's high renown<sup>3</sup>, and haply one is born who shall supplant them both<sup>4</sup>. Worldly fame is naught else than a breath of wind, which blows now from this quarter now from that, and changes its name because it changes its direction. Even before the lapse of a thousand years, what will it advantage thy reputation to have put off thy robe of flesh in old age, instead of dying ere thou hadst ceased from childish prattle? And a thousand years are a briefer period in comparison of eternity, than is the movement of an eyelid compared with that sphere<sup>5</sup> which makes its revolution in heaven most slowly. The name of him who creeps so on his way in front

<sup>1</sup> Oderisi d'Agobbio (or Gubbio) was a famous miniature painter.

<sup>2</sup> The founder of the Italian schools of painting; Giotto was his pupil.

<sup>3</sup> The two poets here intended are probably Guido Guinicelli (1230-76) and Guido Cavalcanti (1255-1300).

<sup>4</sup> Dante himself is probably meant.

<sup>5</sup> The Heaven of the Fixed Stars. The comparison here is between the time occupied by the movement of the eyelid and of the sphere.

of me all Tuscany proclaimed; and now it is hardly whispered in Siena, of which place he was leader, when the madness of the Florentines was discomfited <sup>1</sup>, which at that time was as proud as now it is abased. The fame of men is like the colour of the grass, which comes and goes, and is faded by him <sup>2</sup>, through whose agency it springs fresh and green from the earth.'

Provenzano  
Salvani.

And I to him: 'Thy truthful words infuse into my heart righteous humility, and thou dost abase the pride that swells within me: but who is he, of whom but now thou wast speaking?' 'That is Provenzan Salvani <sup>3</sup>,' he replied; 'and he is here, because he was ambitious of bringing Siena wholly under his power. Ever since his death he hath pursued his way in this fashion, and doth so unceasingly; such is the quittance paid by one who in the world hath aspired too high.' And I: 'If a spirit who before repenting waits to the extreme verge of life, must abide below, nor ascend to this upper region, until a period equal to his lifetime hath elapsed, unless he be aided by pious prayers, how is it that it was permitted him to come?' 'When he was at the acme of his glory,' he said, 'of his own free will, laying aside all shame, he took his place in the great square at Siena; and there, to deliver a friend from the penalty he was undergoing in Charles's prison, he shrank not from trembling in every vein <sup>4</sup>. More I will not add, and I know that what I say is past belief; yet but a short time will elapse ere thy neighbours will so

<sup>1</sup> At the battle of Montaperti; cp. *Inf.* x. 85, 86.

<sup>2</sup> By the sun.

<sup>3</sup> An eminent Ghibelline leader.

<sup>4</sup> This friend was taken prisoner by Charles of Anjou, and a large sum of money was demanded as the price of his life. In order to obtain this, Provenzano openly begged for contributions from the citizens of Siena.



behave, that it will be in thy power to illustrate it'. This act of his it was, which saved him from that place of durance.'

## CANTO XII. THE FIRST CORNICE

Side by side, like oxen beneath the yoke, I went my way with that burdened spirit, so long as my kind Preceptor permitted; but when he said: 'Leave him and proceed; here 'tis well that each with all his might should speed his bark with sail and oar,' I resumed the upright attitude which is natural in walking, albeit my thoughts were still depressed and lowly. I had started, and was gladly following in my Master's footsteps, and both of us were now displaying our nimbleness<sup>2</sup>, when he said to me: 'Turn thine eyes downward; thou wilt do well, in order to lighten the journey, to regard the resting-place of thy feet.' As over the buried dead, to perpetuate their memory, underground tombs bear engraved the likeness of what they were in life; whence tears are oftentimes shed on the spot by reason of the pangs of remembrance, which excite only the compassionate; with such figures, but of more perfect aspect corresponding to the craftsmanship, I saw the whole space covered, which projects from the Mountain to form a road.

The sculptured road.

On one side I saw him who was created noble above all other creatures<sup>3</sup>, fall like lightning down from heaven. On

Examples of the fatal effects of pride.

<sup>1</sup> In 1302 Dante became an outcast from Florence.

<sup>2</sup> In contrast to the burdened spirits.

<sup>3</sup> Lucifer. The examples of the fatal effects of pride, which are here sculptured on the roadway of the Cornice, are arranged in pairs, one of them being in each case taken from Scripture, the other from heathen sources.

the other side I beheld Briareus<sup>1</sup> lying pierced by the celestial shaft, a burden to the earth through the chill of death. Apollo I saw, and Pallas and Mars withal, still in arms and grouped around their father, contemplating the Giants' scattered limbs. I beheld Nimrod at the foot of his mighty structure<sup>2</sup>, bewildered in his look, as he gazed at the folk who in Shinar were partners in his pride. O Niobe, with what woful eyes I saw thee represented on the roadway with seven of thy dead children on either hand<sup>3</sup>! O Saul, how wast thou displayed there dead, fallen on thine own sword in Gilboa, where thereafter dropped neither rain nor dew<sup>4</sup>. Thee too I beheld, O vain Arachne, already half changed into a spider, in despair over the shreds of the web which was wrought in an evil hour for thee<sup>5</sup>. O Rehoboam, thy form as sculptured there no longer wears a threatening look, but is borne away on a chariot terror-stricken, or ever another puts it to flight<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore the hard pavement set forth to view how Alcmaeon caused the luckless ornament to appear to his mother too costly a gift<sup>7</sup>. It declared too how Sennacherib's sons fell upon him within the temple, and

<sup>1</sup> One of the Giants, who assaulted heaven; he is here mentioned apart from the others.

<sup>2</sup> The Tower of Babel, which in the Middle Ages was believed to have been built by Nimrod.

<sup>3</sup> Niobe's children were killed by Apollo and Diana, because she boasted that she had many children, whereas Latona had only two.

<sup>4</sup> Cp. 1 Sam. xxxi. 1-6; 2 Sam. i. 21.

<sup>5</sup> Arachne challenged Minerva to compete with her in weaving, but when she had completed her work Minerva tore it in pieces. Arachne was afterwards changed into a spider.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Kings xii. 14, 18.

<sup>7</sup> Alcmaeon avenged on his mother Eriphyle the death of his father Amphiaraus, whom she betrayed for the bribe of a necklace. Her pride arose from the possession of the necklace.

how after his death they left him there<sup>1</sup>. It represented the rout which Tomyris inflicted, and the ghastly deed of blood, when she said to Cyrus: 'Thou didst thirst for blood, and of blood I give thee thy fill<sup>2</sup>.' It displayed the Assyrians flying in disorder after Holofernes' death, and his headless trunk withal<sup>3</sup>. There I saw 'Troy all ashes and gaping hollows: O Ilion, how fallen, how abject didst thou appear in the portraiture which there is seen! What master of the brush or the pencil could be found, capable of portraying the shades and outlines, which there would arouse the admiration of every appreciative spirit? The dead appeared dead, the living alive; he that saw the original of what was beneath my feet while I advanced in a stooping posture, saw not the figures more clearly than did I. Now plume yourselves, and walk with haughty countenance, ye sons of Eve, nor turn your looks downward so as to perceive the dangerous path ye tread.

Already had we circled round more of the mountain-side, and the sun had advanced still further in his course than my mind thus engrossed was aware, when he who went ever on the watch in front of me thus began: 'Uplift thy head; 'tis no longer the time to walk thus preoccupied. See there an Angel<sup>4</sup> who is preparing to come to meet us; see how the sixth handmaiden is returning from the service of the day<sup>5</sup>. Bedeck with reverence thy mien and looks, so that it may

An Angel  
shows the  
Poets the  
passage  
upward.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings xix. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Cyrus attacked the Massagetæ, and slew the son of their queen Tomyris, but was afterwards defeated with great slaughter, and himself lost his life. Tomyris then ordered his head to be cut off and thrust into a vessel full of blood.

<sup>3</sup> Judith xiii-xv.

<sup>4</sup> This Angel guards the stairway leading to the second Cornice.

<sup>5</sup> i. e. the sixth hour is just passed.

please him well to send us upward; bethink thee that to-day will never dawn again.' Well used was I to his admonishing me evermore to waste no time, so that on that subject his speech could not be dark to me. The beauteous being came on towards us robed in white, and in countenance like to the quivering morning star. He opened wide his arms, and then outspread his wings, and said: 'Come ye; here the steps are near at hand, and now the ascent is easy to you. Few, few are they who come in answer to this announcement. O race of men, created for an upward flight, why fall ye so soon before a slight breath of wind?' He led us to a point where the rock was rifted; there he waved his wings over my brow, and anon he guaranteed me a safe progress.

A 'P' is  
removed  
from  
Dante's  
forehead.

Even as, for the ascent of the mountain, where stands the church<sup>1</sup> that above Rubaconte's bridge dominates the city of good government, on the right hand the bold abruptness of the rise is broken by the steps, which were made in the days when the ledger and the stave were safe<sup>2</sup>; so the steepness of the slope is moderated, which there descends full rapidly from the next Cornice; but the high rock presses close on either hand. As we betook ourselves thitherward, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit<sup>3</sup>' was sung in words, the melody whereof language could not express. Ah! how unlike are these approaches to those in Hell, for here the entrance is made

<sup>1</sup> San Miniato, which overlooks Florence; at the foot of the hill on which it stands lies the bridge then called Rubaconte from the name of the Podestà who laid its foundation stone.

<sup>2</sup> i. e. in the days when honesty prevailed. The reference is to two notorious instances of official dishonesty in Dante's age, the one in tampering with the public ledger, the other in diminishing the standard of the bushel measure.

<sup>3</sup> This is the Beatitude proper to this Cornice, which is pronounced as Dante leaves it.



with strains of joy, and there below with wild laments. We were now mounting the sacred stairs, and I felt myself strangely lighter than I had felt before on the level pathway; wherefore I said: 'Tell me, Master, what weight hath been taken off me, that in walking I should feel scarce any fatigue?' He made reply: 'When the P's, which, though all but obliterated, still remain on thy face, have been completely cancelled, as the first one hath<sup>1</sup>, thy feet will be so mastered by thy good will, that, far from feeling fatigue, they will rejoice in being impelled upward.' Then did I act like one who walks with an object on his head, whereof he would be unaware, were it not that others by their glances awake his suspicions; whereupon his hand sets itself to ascertain the truth, and searches and finds it, thus discharging the function which the eyes are powerless to fulfill; and with the fingers of my right hand, one by one, I found the letters, which he who holds the keys inscribed on my temples, to be but six; on seeing which my Leader smiled.

### CANTO XIII. THE SECOND CORNICE

We had reached the summit of the stairway, where the Mountain which on its ascending stages frees men from sin is cut away for the second time: there doth another Cornice gird the hill around in like manner as the first, save that it curves its arc more quickly<sup>2</sup>. Nor shadow, nor sculptured figure is there in view; both the wall of rock and the footway look blank and bare from the livid colour of the stone<sup>3</sup>. 'If we wait here for folk of whom to inquire our way,' the Poet

The second Cornice, of envy.

<sup>1</sup> The first P was removed by the Angel waving his wings.

<sup>2</sup> i. e. it forms a narrower circle.

<sup>3</sup> This is the typical colour of envy.

remarked, 'I fear me our choice may be long delayed.' Anon he fixed his eyes steadily on the sun; then turning on the pivot of his right side he wheeled round the left. 'Thou kindly light,' he said, 'trusting in whom I enter on the unwonted road, do thou conduct us, as we need to be conducted in this spot: thou warmest the world, thou dost enlighten it; when other reason prompts not a different course, thy rays should ever guide us.'

Examples of  
charity; the  
punishment  
of envy.

Already we had advanced there the distance which here on earth is reckoned for a mile—and that too with speed, so eager were our wills—when we were ware, through the ear, not through the eye, of spirits flying towards us, who uttered courteous invitations to the feast of love<sup>1</sup>. The first voice which passed us in its flight said in loud tones, 'They have no wine<sup>2</sup>'; and as it sped on it repeated this in our rear. And ere it had wholly ceased to be heard by reason of the distance, another went by exclaiming, 'I am Orestes<sup>3</sup>'; and it too stayed not its course. 'Oh!' I cried, 'my Father, what voices are these I hear?' And even as I asked the question,—lo the third, which said: 'Love those who have done you wrong<sup>4</sup>.' And the kind Master: 'In this circle the sin of envy is chastised, and for this cause the lashes of the scourge are derived from love. The curb<sup>5</sup> is wont to have the contrary tone; methinks, if my judgement errs not, thou wilt hear it ere thou reachest the Pass of

<sup>1</sup> The voices proclaim examples of charity, the virtue which is the opposite of the vice of envy. These are the Blessed Virgin and Pylades.

<sup>2</sup> This showed the Virgin's thoughtful care for others at the marriage feast at Cana.

<sup>3</sup> Pylades desired to personate Orestes, and to be put to death in his stead.

<sup>4</sup> From the Sermon on the Mount.

<sup>5</sup> The examples which deter from envy.

Pardon<sup>1</sup>. But look onward through the air with keen attention, and thou wilt behold folk sitting in front of us, stationed, one and all, along the bank of rock.' Then did I more than ever open mine eyes, and gazing before me I perceived shades wearing mantles which in colour resembled the stone. And when we had moved forward a little space, I heard them cry: 'Mary, pray for us'; and then invoke Michael, Peter, and all the Saints<sup>2</sup>. There walks not the earth this day, I ween, a man so hard-hearted, that he would not feel a throe of compassion at what I thereupon beheld; for when I approached so near to them that their looks were fully revealed to me, my load of grief found a vent through mine eyes. In mean sackcloth they seemed to me to be clothed, and with their shoulders they supported one another, while all of them were supported by the bank. In such wise do the poverty-stricken blind folk station themselves to beg their livelihood at the places where indulgences are granted, and one reclines his head upon another, that pity may the sooner be awakened in strangers, not by the sound of their words alone, but by the sight, which craves help not less importunately. And even as the blind are not benefited by the sun, so on the shades, in the place whereof but now I spake, the light of heaven doth not bestow its boon; for the eyelids of all of them are pierced by an iron wire, which stitches them, even as the lids of an untamed hawk are stitched to cure its restlessness.

I seemed to myself, as I passed along, to be committing an outrage in seeing others while I was myself unseen; wherefore I betook myself to my sage Counsellor. Well did he comprehend my meaning, though I had not opened my lips;

Dante addresses the spirits.

<sup>1</sup> The entrance to the next stairway.

<sup>2</sup> They sing the Litany of the Saints.

accordingly he waited not for me to ask, but said: 'Speak, but be concise and to the point.' Virgil came between me and that side of the Cornice where there is risk of falling, because no parapet encompasses it; on the other side of me were the devout shades, who through the grievous stitching were forcing out the tears so that they bathed their cheeks. I turned me toward them, and thus began: 'Ye folk, who are assured of seeing the sole object of your longings, the Light sublime; so may grace, I pray, speedily dissolve the impurities which clog your conscience, in order that through it the current of your thoughts may flow down in limpid stream: tell me—for the news will be acceptable and welcome to me—whether there be here in your number an Italian spirit; and haply it may be well for him if I learn his name.' 'My brother, there is one true city whereof all are citizens'; but thou meanest a spirit that lived in Italy during its earthly pilgrimage.' This was what methought I heard in reply, a brief space beyond where I was standing; whereupon I made myself heard still further on.

Sapia.

Among the other shades I beheld one which wore an expectant look; and should any one ask, 'How was this expressed?' 'twas thus; it raised its chin, as is the manner of the blind. 'O spirit,' I said, 'who dost subdue thyself that thou mayst rise, if thou art the one that replied to me, reveal thyself to me by thy name or thine abode.' 'Of Siena I was,' it answered, 'and in company with these others I here cleanse the stains of my sinful life, praying Him with tears to vouchsafe to us His presence. Sapient I was not, albeit Sapia was my name; and in others' calamities I rejoiced far more than in mine own good fortune: and lest thou shouldst fancy that I am deceiving thee, hear whether I was

<sup>1</sup> The city of God.



not as foolish as I say. I was already on my life's downward slope, when hard by Colle<sup>1</sup> my fellow citizens met their foes in the field, and I prayed to God for that which he had himself ordained. There were they routed, and forced into the bitter straits which attend on flight; whereat, as I watched the chase, I conceived a joy great beyond all compare, so that I uplifted my face defiantly, and cried aloud to God: 'Now no more I fear thee'; as doth the blackbird in a short spell of sunshine<sup>2</sup>. At my life's end I desired reconciliation with God; and I should not yet be reducing my debt by penance<sup>3</sup>, were it not that Pier Pettinagno<sup>4</sup> felt loving compassion for me, and remembered me in his holy prayers. But who art thou, that goest thy way inquiring of our condition, with thine eyes at liberty, as I conceive, and dost breathe as thou speakest?' 'Of mine eyes,' I replied, 'I shall hereafter be deprived in this place, but not for long; for slight is the sin which they have committed by envious glances. Far greater is the fear which possesses my soul of the suffering below, so that even now the burden of that lower Cornice weighs me down<sup>5</sup>.' And she to me: 'Who then hath led thee up here into our company, if thou expectest to return below?' And I: 'He that accompanies me but doth not speak; and I am alive; wherefore proffer thy request, elect spirit, if thou desirest that I should exert myself hereafter for thee in the other world.' 'Oh this,' she replied, 'is so strange a thing to hear, that it is a mighty token of God's love for thee; do

<sup>1</sup> A town of Tuscany, in the neighbourhood of which the Sieneſe were defeated by the Florentines.

<sup>2</sup> According to the ſtory, the blackbird uſes theſe words after a ſucceſſion of fine days in winter.

<sup>3</sup> i. e. I ſhould be in Ante-Purgatory in the number of the Negligent.

<sup>4</sup> A hermit.

<sup>5</sup> Becauſe his chief ſin was pride.

thou then ever and anon aid me with thy prayers. And by thy dearest object of desire I conjure thee, if ever thou dost set foot on the land of Tuscany, to restore my good repute in my relations' eyes. Thou wilt find them in the number of that vain folk, who put their trust in Talamone<sup>1</sup>, and will waste more hope there than in the search for the Diana<sup>2</sup>; but what their commanders shall expend<sup>3</sup> is costlier still.'

#### CANTO XIV. THE SECOND CORNICE

Guido del  
Duca and  
Rinieri da  
Calboli.

'Who is this that makes the circuit of our Mountain ere death hath lent him wings to fly, and opens his eyes and closes them at pleasure?' 'I know not who he is, but I know that he is not alone; do thou inquire of him, who art nearer to him than I, and greet him kindly, so that he may speak to us.' Thus did two spirits, reclining one against the other, converse there on my right hand concerning me; and anon they upturned their faces to address me. Then one of them said: 'Thou spirit, that, while still imprisoned in the body, pursuest thy way toward heaven, for love's sake compassionate us, and tell us whence thou comest and who thou art; for the grace conceded to thee excites in us such wonder as is due to an unheard-of thing.' And I: 'Through mid Tuscany there wanders a streamlet, which hath its birth in Falterona<sup>4</sup>, nor rests content with a course of a hundred miles. From its

<sup>1</sup> A port on the coast of the Maremma, on which the Siennese were expending much money.

<sup>2</sup> A subterranean stream in Siena.

<sup>3</sup> viz. their lives, owing to the unhealthiness of the site.

<sup>4</sup> The ridge of the Apennines to the north-east of Florence.

banks comes the person which I wear; to tell thee who I am would be a waste of words, for as yet my name doth not resound afar.' Then did the spirit that spake before reply to me: 'If my mind penetrates thy meaning aright, thou speakest of the Arno.'

And the other said to him: 'Wherefore did he withhold the title of that river, even as men do when speaking of direful things?' And the spirit of whom that question was asked delivered himself thus: 'I know not, but in sooth 'tis well that the name of that valley should perish; for from its starting-point—where the rugged mountain chain from which Pelorum<sup>1</sup> is torn away is so prolific<sup>2</sup>, that at few points it exceeds that measure—till it reaches the place where it yields up its stream in compensation for those particles of the sea which the atmosphere absorbs, and which provide the rivers with their train of waters, virtue is expelled as an enemy by all men, like a snake, either from ill fortune attaching to the spot, or from bad habit which goads them on; whence the inhabitants of that wretched valley have so changed their nature, that one might think they had been bred in Circe's sty. Mid filthy swine<sup>3</sup>, more fit to feed on acorns than on other food adapted to human use, it first directs its scanty track. Anon in its downward course it meets with curs<sup>4</sup>, disposed to snarl more than their strength demands, and at them in contempt it twists its muzzle<sup>5</sup>. Still it descends, and in proportion as it widens, the accursed and ill-fated dike

Vices of the inhabitants of the Arno valley.

<sup>1</sup> The north-eastern promontory of Sicily, which was believed by the ancients to have been torn away from the Apennines at the extremity of Italy by a convulsion of nature.

<sup>2</sup> i. e. forms a knot, from which several branches diverge.

<sup>3</sup> The rude inhabitants of the Casentino.

<sup>4</sup> The people of Arezzo.

<sup>5</sup> As it approaches Arezzo the Arno makes a sharp bend.

finds the dogs replaced by wolves<sup>1</sup>. Thereafter, flowing down through many a deep abyss, it reaches the foxes<sup>2</sup>, who are so replete with cunning, that they fear no cleverness that can master them. Nor will I cease from speaking because others are listening to me; and it will be to that man's profit, if hereafter he remembers that which a truthful inspiration doth unravel to me. I behold thy grandson<sup>3</sup>, who becomes the hunter of those wolves on the cruel river's bank, and dismays them all: while they are still alive he traffics in their flesh<sup>4</sup>; anon he slaughters them like ancient beeves; many he deprives of life, and himself of good repute. Bloodstained he issues from the dismal wood, leaving it in such case, that in a thousand years from now it shall not regain its former foliage.' As at the announcement of distressing misfortunes the countenance of the hearer is troubled, from whatever side the danger may attack him; so saw I the other spirit, who had turned him round to listen, become distraught and sad, as soon as he had laid those words to heart.

Degeneration of the Romagna families.

The speech of the one and the other's looks had made me anxious to learn their names, and these not without entreaty I inquired; whereupon the spirit that first spake to me began once more: 'Thou desirest that I should condescend to do for thee, what for me thou wilt not do; but inasmuch as it is God's good pleasure that such a measure of His grace should manifest itself in thee, I will not be niggardly toward thee: be it known to thee then that I am Guido del Duca. So fevered by envy was my blood, that at the sight of another's

<sup>1</sup> The rapacious Florentines.

<sup>2</sup> The Pisans.

<sup>3</sup> The speaker here is Guido del Duca, the person addressed Rinieri da Calboli; the grandson of the latter was Fulcieri da Calboli, who, when Podestà of Florence in 1302, persecuted the White Guelfs, who are here called wolves on account of their rapacity.

<sup>4</sup> i. e. tortures them with a view to his own advancement.



enjoyment thou mightest have seen me tinged with a livid hue. From the seed thus sown this straw is the harvest that I reap. O human race, wherefore set ye your heart on things where interdict of partnership must be? This one is Rinieri; this is the honour, the pride of the house of Calboli, wherein none other hath since inherited his worth. Nor hath his family alone, between the Po and the mountains, and the Reno and the sea<sup>1</sup>, been denuded of the virtues which righteous dealing and gentle living need; for the country enclosed by these boundaries is full of poisonous growths, so that now it would be long ere cultivation could reduce them. Where is the good Lizio<sup>2</sup>? where Arrigo Mainardi, and Pier Traversaro and Guido di Carpigna? Alas for Romagna's sons who now are bastards! When doth a Fabbro take root again in Bologna? when in Faenza a Bernardin di Fosco, the noble scion of a lowly plant? Marvel not, thou Tuscan, if I weep at the recollection of Ugolino d' Azzo who dwelt among us, and withal of Guido da Prata, and of Federico Tignoso and his company, of the house of Traversara and the Anastagi—two families alike devoid of heirs; of the dames and the cavaliers, the toils and the repose, which inspired our souls with love and courtesy, there where men's hearts have become so depraved. O Brettinoro, why dost thou not vanish, seeing that thy family hath departed, and with them many folk to escape from iniquity? 'Tis well for Bagnacavallo that it hath no progeny, and ill for Castrocaro, and worse for Conio, that it takes thought for perpetuating such-like Counts. The Pagani<sup>3</sup> will conduct themselves aright from what time their

<sup>1</sup> These are the boundaries of the Romagna.

<sup>2</sup> The names here given are those of virtuous gentlemen and families of the Romagna of former times.

<sup>3</sup> They were lords of Faenza and Imola; the head of the family, Maghinardo, was surnamed 'the Devil.'

Devil departs, yet not so that their record can ever remain untarnished. O Ugolino de' Fantolini, thy name is safe, since no longer is there any in prospect whose degeneracy may dim its lustre<sup>1</sup>. But go thy way now, thou Tuscan, for tears are for the moment far more grateful to me than speaking, so greatly hath our discourse oppressed my mind.'

Examples  
of envy.

We knew that those dear spirits were ware of our departure; hence their silence inspired us with confidence in the road we took. So soon as we pursued our way alone, a voice like that when lightning cleaves the air came on to meet us, and this was what it said: 'Whoso findeth me shall slay me<sup>2</sup>'; anon it sped afar, even as thunder which dies away after it hath suddenly rent the cloud. When from this voice our ears had truce, lo another came with a crash so loud, that it resembled a thunder-clap following closely on the flash; and it said: 'I am Aglauros, who was changed into stone<sup>3</sup>.' Thereupon, that I might draw close to the Poet, instead of advancing I withdrew my footstep. When now the air was still on every side, he said to me: 'That was the harsh bit, which should restrain a man within his proper bounds. But ye take the bait, so that the old adversary's hook doth draw you to him; and then neither curb nor recall is of much avail. The heaven calls you and revolves around you, displaying before you its eternal beauties, the while your eyes are fixed only on the earth; and therefore doth the all-seeing One chastise you.'

<sup>1</sup> He died without heirs.

<sup>2</sup> The first example of envy here given is Cain; cp. Gen. iv. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Aglauros, finding that Hermes was in love with her sister Herse, attempted to prevent him from entering Herse's house; on which she was changed by him into stone.

CANTO XV. THE THIRD CORNICE

So much of the sun's course toward nightfall seemed at this moment to remain, as between the beginning of the day and the end of the third hour is seen of the sphere which, like a child, is ever in restless motion; it was eventide there and midnight here<sup>1</sup>. And, seeing that we had made the circuit of the Mountain so far, that now our course lay straight toward the west, his rays were smiting us full in the face, when I felt that mine eyes were overpowered by the brilliant light far more than at the first, and something—but what, I knew not—dazed me: wherefore I raised my hands to the ridge of mine eyebrows, to form a screen such as modifies the excessive brightness of an object. As when from water or from a mirror a ray darts off in the opposite direction, rising at a corresponding angle to that at which it falls, and deviates as far from the perpendicular, when at an equal distance therefrom—a fact which observation and science prove; so did it appear to me that the space there in front of me was smitten by refracted light, wherefore I speedily averted my looks. ‘Kind Father, what is that,’ I said, ‘from which I cannot effectually shelter mine eyes, and which seems to be moving towards us?’ ‘Marvel not,’ he replied, ‘if the ministers of heaven still dazzle thee; it is a messenger, who comes to invite us to ascend. Ere long such sights as these will not be oppressive to thee, but a source of joy,

The Angel  
of the  
second  
Cornice.

<sup>1</sup> The statement made in this passage is expressed with great circumlocution. The sphere of the Heavens here spoken of is that which revolves with the sun, and the period of its revolution between 6 and 9 a.m. is three hours; hence, as a corresponding period is said now to remain before sunset, the time intended will be about 3 p.m. in Purgatory. It is called eventide, because Dante regarded that portion of the day as commencing at 3 o'clock. In Italy the time would be midnight.

even to the utmost capacity of thy nature.' So soon as we reached the blessed Angel<sup>1</sup>, in glad tones he said: 'Enter ye here, where the stairway is far less steep than the former ones.' Quitting that spot we ascended, and 'Blessed are the merciful<sup>2</sup>' was chanted in our rear, and 'Rejoice thou who conquerest.'

Temporal  
and spiritual  
blessings.

My Master and I, we two alone, proceeded upward, and as we went I bethought me how I might profit by his discourse; so I addressed myself to him with the following question: 'What meant the spirit from Romagna, when he spake of "interdict" and "partnership"<sup>3</sup>?' Whereto he replied: 'He is ware of the detriment caused by his besetting sin<sup>4</sup>; what wonder then, if he reproves men for it, in order that they may rue it the less? It is because your desires aim at things, whereof a portion is lost when they are shared, that envy plies the bellows to excite your regrets. But if the love of the highest sphere turned your longings toward things above, the fear of that would not oppress your hearts; for there, the greater the number is of those who say "ours," the greater is the amount of blessing which each possesses, and the amount of love which burns in that mansion.' 'I lack satisfaction more,' I said, 'than if erewhile I had held my peace, and more questions gather in my mind. How can it be that a blessing widely dispensed should make its more numerous recipients richer in possessing it, than had it been the property of a few?' And he to me: 'Because thou fixest thy mind solely on things of earth, thou pluckest

<sup>1</sup> The Angel of the second Cornice, who guards the stairway leading to the third.

<sup>2</sup> The Beatitude for the Cornice where envy is expiated.

<sup>3</sup> Guido del Duca had said: 'O human race, wherefore set ye your heart on things where interdict of partnership must be?' *Purg.* xiv. 86, 87 (p. 209).

<sup>4</sup> Envy.



darkness from the very light. That infinite and unspeakable Good which dwells on high, is attracted to love, even as a ray of light to a luminous body. It communicates its ardour in proportion to what it finds; so that, the more widely love extends, the greater is the measure in which God's grace is imparted to it: and according as the number of harmonious spirits above is greater, there are more objects of pure love, and more love is felt there, and this is reflected, as by a mirror, from one to the other. And if this argument of mine doth not appease thy cravings, thou wilt see Beatrice, and she will fully relieve thee of this and every other desire. Only use diligence that the five remaining wounds, which can be healed by means of contrition, may speedily be removed, as are already the other two.' When it was on my lips to say: 'Thou hast contented me,' I perceived that I had reached the next Cornice, so that my eager eyes imposed silence upon me.

There methought I was suddenly rapt into an ecstatic vision<sup>1</sup>, and saw in a temple an assemblage of persons, and at the entrance a dame with a mother's loving mien, who said: 'My Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.' And on this, as she ceased to speak, the first scene disappeared. Next I beheld another dame<sup>2</sup>, adown whose cheeks fell such drops as grief distils, when it arises from deep indignation against others; and she said: 'If thou art ruler of that city, whose name aroused so great controversy between the gods<sup>3</sup>, and

The third Cornice, of anger; examples of gentleness.

<sup>1</sup> The examples of gentleness presented in this vision are the Blessed Virgin, Pisistratus and St. Stephen.

<sup>2</sup> The wife of Pisistratus, whose daughter had been kissed by a young man in public.

<sup>3</sup> Neptune and Minerva contended for the privilege of giving their name to Athens.

from which all knowledge radiates, avenge thyself, O Pistratus, on those audacious arms which embraced our daughter.' And to her, methought, with a tranquil countenance the prince replied in kind and gentle wise: 'If we condemn one who loves us, how shall we deal with such as desire our bane?' Anon I saw a crowd of men inflamed by wrath, who were massacring a youth with stones, and with loud voices shouted amain one to another: 'Slay, Slay'; and him I beheld bowing down to earth under the hand of death which was already oppressing him, yet ever opening wide his eyes toward heaven, the while in the midst of that dread struggle he prayed the Lord above to forgive his persecutors, wearing the look which evokes compassion.

Virgil  
stimulates  
Dante's  
vigour.

When my spirit returned to the outer world, to face those realities which are external to it, I recognized the vanity of my imaginations, which yet had a semblance of truth. My Leader, in whose eyes my demeanour was like that of one shaking off sleep, said: 'What ails thee, that thou canst not stand upright, but hast walked for more than half a league with drooping eyelids and unsteady gait, like a person overpowered by wine or sleep?' 'My loving Father,' I replied, 'if thou wilt hearken to me, I will tell thee what appeared to me when I was so bereft of my walking powers.' And he: 'Hadst thou a hundred masks on thy face, thy thoughts, however insignificant, would not be hidden from me. The object of thy vision was, that thou mightest not be loth to open thy heart to the waters of peace, which emanate from the eternal fountain. When I asked: "What ails thee?" 'twas not as he might inquire, who looks only with the eye which ceases to see when the body lies deserted by the soul; my purpose in asking was, that I might stimulate thy progress: 'tis thus that the sluggish should be incited, who are slow to

avail themselves of their waking hours when these return.' We pursued our way during the evening hour gazing onward, far as our eyes could reach, fronting the bright rays of closing day; when lo, little by little there came on towards us a smoke dark as night, from which no place of shelter presented itself; through this our eyesight and the pure air were lost to us.

## CANTO XVI. THE THIRD CORNICE

Darkness of Hell, or of night, when night is bereft of Spirits every planet beneath a barren sky, being overcast to the <sup>enveloped</sup> utmost by clouds, never drew before my sight a veil so thick <sup>in dense</sup> smoke, or so harsh to the sense, as the smoke which there enveloped us, for it suffered not the eye to remain unclosed; wherefore my sagacious and trusty Guide drew close to me and proffered me his shoulder. Even as a blind man follows his conductor, lest he lose his way, or strike against an object which may harm him, or haply cause his death, in such wise did I pass through the foul and bitter air, hearkening to my Leader, who said repeatedly: 'Give heed that thou be not parted from me.' I was ware of voices, which, methought, one and all prayed the Lamb of God, who taketh away sin, for peace and mercy. With *Agnus Dei* they alike commenced; all used the same words and the same tone, so that full concord seemed to exist between them<sup>1</sup>. 'These whom I hear, my Master,' I said, 'are they spirits?' And he to me: 'Thou judgest rightly; and they are freeing them from the bonds of anger.'

'Say, who art thou, that passest through our smoke, Marco Lombardo.

<sup>1</sup> The concord thus expressed forms a contrast to the discord arising from anger, the sin from which the spirits are purged in this Cornice.

talking of us, as if forsooth thou didst still measure time by calends<sup>1</sup>?' So spake one of the voices. Whereupon my Master said: 'Reply, and inquire whether here is the passage upward.' And I: 'Thou being, who art purifying thyself, that thou mayst return with fair aspect to thy Creator, if thou wilt follow me thou shalt hear a wondrous tale.' 'As far as I may I will accompany thee,' he replied; 'and if the smoke forbids our seeing, instead thereof hearing shall be our bond of union.' Thereupon I thus began: 'Within the swathing bands which death unbinds<sup>2</sup> I pursue mine upward way, and through the anguish of Hell I came hither; wherefore—seeing that God hath so wondrously infolded me in His grace, that it is His pleasure that I should visit His court in a manner all unwonted in these latter days—forbear not to disclose who thou wast before thy death, but tell me this, and withal whether I am on the right road toward the passage; and thy words will serve to guide us.✕' 'A Lombard I was, and Marco was my name: I was conversant with the world, and loved that nobility of soul, whereat all men now have ceased to aim. For the upward course thou art on the right track.' Such was his reply, and then he added: 'When thou art above, I beseech thee pray for me.' And I to him: 'Faithfully I engage to fulfil thy request; but there is a question which doth harass me, until I am quit thereof. Erewhile its force was single, but now it is increased twofold, when I hear thy assertion, which certifies me, as I compare the present with a former statement, of the fact to which that question refers. The world full sure is bereft of every virtue, even as thy words declare, and is pregnant with wickedness, and overshadowed thereby; but indicate to me, I pray, the cause, so that I may see it myself

<sup>1</sup> i. e. as if thou wert still alive.

<sup>2</sup> The body is meant.



and make it known to others, for some men attribute this to the heavens<sup>1</sup>, and some to an agency on earth.'

After uttering a deep sigh, which anguish forced into a cry, he thus began: 'Brother, the world is blind, and in sooth thou comest therefrom. Ye who are alive refer every cause to the high heavens alone, as if they moved all things by necessity along with them. If this were true, the freedom of the will would be annulled in you, and it would not be just that virtue should be requited by happiness and vice by suffering. The heavens originate your impulses; I say not all of them; but supposing I did say so, yet light is given you to teach you right and wrong, and freewill, which, though it hath a hard struggle in its first encounters with the heavenly influences, in the end wins the day completely, if it be well sustained. It is a higher Power, and a better nature whereto ye are subject, though still free; and this it is which creates the mind in you, which the heavens do not control. Wherefore, if the world at present goes astray, the cause is in you, and in you it should be sought, and for the search I will now be a faithful pioneer to thee.

Planetary  
influences  
and freewill

'From the hand of Him who contemplates it lovingly before it is created—all guileless, like a child which plays its little part with tears and smiles—the soul comes forth, unwitting, save that, under the influence of its glad Creator, it betakes itself readily to that which pleases it. The taste for trivial enjoyments first attracts it; by these it is beguiled, and these it pursues, unless a guide or a curb divert its desires. Wherefore there was need of the restraint of law, and of a king withal, who should discern at least the bulwark of the

Temporal  
and spiritual  
government.

<sup>1</sup> i. e. to the planetary influences, by which, according to Dante, the characters and fortunes of men were affected. These influences, and the spiritual agencies which regulate them, are treated of in *Par. ii.* 112 foll.

true city<sup>1</sup>. The laws exist, but who administers them? No one; because the shepherd<sup>2</sup>, who goes before the flock, though he can chew the cud, hath not the cloven hoof<sup>3</sup>: and so the folk, who see their guide aim only at covetous gains, make these their livelihood, and seek for naught beyond. 'Tis plain to see that evil guidance, and not the corruption of your nature, is the cause which hath vitiated the world. Rome, which created the world of good order, was wont to have two Suns, which enlightened both roads, that of the world and that of God. The one Sun hath extinguished the other; the sword is united with the pastoral staff; and the two together must of necessity follow the road to ruin, forasmuch as, being combined, they fear not one another. If thou dost not approve my saying, consider the ear of corn, for every plant is known by its fruits<sup>4</sup>. ✓ In the country watered by the Adige and the Po<sup>5</sup>, worth and courtesy prevailed ere Frederic was involved in strife<sup>6</sup>; at the present time, whoso from sense of shame hath ceased to communicate with the good or seek their company, can without misgiving pass that way. Three aged men, 'tis true, remain there

<sup>1</sup> The bulwark of the city of God is justice.

<sup>2</sup> The Pope.

<sup>3</sup> According to the allegorical interpretation here, 'chewing the cud' signifies acquiring wisdom; and 'having the cloven hoof' means (1) the practice of good morals, which sustains society, in like manner as the divided hoof causes the animals which have it to tread firmly; (2) the separation of the temporal and spiritual powers, which the Popes had ignored. By unprincipled conduct, and appropriating the temporal power, the heads of the Church had corrupted the world.

<sup>4</sup> i. e. consider the evil results of the system.

<sup>5</sup> Lombardy is meant.

<sup>6</sup> The evil result of the Popes taking up the sword is shown by the ruin which had fallen on Lombardy owing to the conflict between Frederick II and the Papal See.

still, in whose persons the days of yore reprove the modern age, and they think it long ere God remove them to a better life—even Corrado da Palazzo, and the good Gherardo, and Guido da Castello, whose French title of ‘the guileless Lombard’ is his more fitting name. Henceforward say that the Church of Rome, through combining in its own hands two spheres of government, falls in the mud, and befouls itself and its burden.’

‘My Marco,’ said I, ‘thy reasoning is sound; and now I perceive why the sons of Levi were devoid of inheritance. But what Gherardo is he, who, thou sayest, hath remained as a specimen of the past generation, to reprehend a depraved age?’ ‘If thy words are not in mockery, they would fain inveigle me,’ he replied; ‘for, though thou speakest the Tuscan tongue, thou professest ignorance of the good Gherardo. I know him by no other surname than what I might derive from his daughter Gaia<sup>1</sup>. God be with you, for I accompany you no longer. See how the lustre which flashes through the smoke beams white already; the Angel<sup>2</sup> is there, and I must retire ere I appear in his presence.’ With that he turned, and no longer hearkened to me. The good Gherardo.

## CANTO XVII. THE THIRD AND FOURTH CORNICES

Bethink thee, Reader, if ever in the mountains a cloud came over thee, through which thou couldst no more see than a mole through its film<sup>3</sup>, how, when the moist thick vapours

<sup>1</sup> Dante appears to have mentioned her because she was distinguished for her vices.

<sup>2</sup> The Angel of the third Cornice.

<sup>3</sup> The eyes of the mole were believed to be covered by a membrane.

begin to disperse, the sun's orb penetrates feebly through them; and thy imagination will promptly realize, how at the first I saw the sun reappear, which even now was setting. Thus, faithfully following in my Master's trusty footsteps, did I emerge from that cloud into its rays, which on the low-lying shores had already disappeared.

Examples  
of anger.

O imaginative power, that dost ever and anon transport us so, that a man heeds not though a thousand trumpets bray around him, by whom art thou excited when the senses present no objects to thee? It is by light, which takes form in the heavens, either from its inherent power, or through the Will which sends it down to earth. On my imagination that woman's crime was figured, who was transformed into the bird which most delights in song<sup>1</sup>; and therewith my mind was so concentrated on itself, that no external object was then admitted by it. Next there rained within my exalted fantasy the figure of one crucified, haughty and fierce in aspect, and with that look he died<sup>2</sup>. Around him stood the lordly Ahasuerus with Esther his spouse and the just Mordecai, who was so upright in word and deed. And no sooner had this imagery of itself dissolved, like a bubble when the water which composed it fails, than there arose in my vision a maiden convulsed with grief, who said: 'O Queen<sup>3</sup>, wherefore hath

<sup>1</sup> The examples of anger which are presented in this ecstatic vision are Procne, Haman and Amata. Procne in revenge for the faithlessness of her husband Tereus killed her son Itys, and served up his flesh to be eaten by his father; for this she was changed into a nightingale.

<sup>2</sup> Haman's rage against Mordecai resulted in his being himself crucified instead of his intended victim; Esther iii. 5; vii. 10.

<sup>3</sup> This is Amata, wife of king Latinus, who hanged herself in anger, because she believed, though mistakenly, that Turnus, to whom her daughter Lavinia was betrothed, had been slain by Aeneas. Lavinia is speaking here.



anger impelled thee to take thy life? To avoid losing Lavinia thou hast destroyed thyself; now thou hast lost me: it is my turn to grieve, and that too, mother mine, for thy death before I have to bewail another's.'

As, when on a sudden an access of light assails our closed eyes, our sleep is broken, and comes and goes ere it entirely ceases; so did my imaginings come to naught, so soon as my face was smitten by a light far more powerful than aught within our ken. When I turned me to see where I was, my mind was diverted from every other thought by a voice which said: 'Here is the ascent'; and this inspired me with so eager a longing to see who was the speaker, that I could not rest until I met him face to face. But even as our eyes are overpowered by the sun, which veils from us its form through excess of light, so at that moment did my power of sight fail me. 'This is a spirit from heaven, who directs us unsolicited on our upward way, and by his own radiancy conceals himself. He deals with us<sup>1</sup> as men treat themselves; for he who waits to be intreated, when he sees the need, is already setting himself in a grudging spirit to refuse. In response to so generous an invitation let us now move forward; let us use all diligence to ascend ere the darkness falls, for after that it is impossible until the return of day.' Thus spake my Leader, and toward a stairway we together turned our feet; and so soon as I reached the first step, I was conscious in my neighbourhood of what seemed the movement of a wing<sup>2</sup>, and of fanning in the face, and of a voice which said: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, who are devoid of unrighteous anger.'

The Angel  
of the third  
Cornice.

Already the last rays which precede the night fell so high above us that in many quarters the stars were visible. 'Where-

The fourth  
Cornice,  
of sloth.

<sup>1</sup> sc. in directing us without being solicited.

<sup>2</sup> That of the Angel,

fore doth my natural vigour fail me thus ?' I said to myself, for I felt that my limbs were spent. We had reached the point where the stairway ceased to rise, and were forced to halt, even as a vessel which hath come to shore : for a while I listened to discover if I could hear aught on the Cornice we had just reached ; then turning to my Master I said : 'Tell me, kind Father, what sin is purged here in the present Circle ? Stay not thy speech, albeit our steps are stayed.' And he to me : 'Tis even here that the love of good, when in defect, recovers itself ; here the too laggard oar is plied anew<sup>1</sup> : but, that thou mayst still more fully understand the matter, give heed to me, and thou shalt reap some profit from our delay.

The sins  
expiated in  
Purgatory.

'Neither the Creator, nor any of his creatures, my son,' he began, 'was ever devoid of love, either instinctive or rational ; and this thou knowest. The instinctive love doth never go astray<sup>2</sup> ; but the other may err through aiming at an evil object, or through defect or through excess of vigour. So long as it is directed toward the highest goods, and observes moderation in respect of secondary goods<sup>3</sup>, it cannot be the cause of sinful pleasure ; but when it turns aside toward evil, or pursues good either in excessive or defective measure, then God's handiwork acts in opposition to its Maker. Hence thou mayst understand, that love is of necessity the seed within you, whence every virtue springs, and every action that merits punishment. Now, seeing that love cannot but regard the welfare of him who feels that love, all beings are exempt from hatred of self ; and seeing that no one can be considered

<sup>1</sup> i. e. previous apathy is made up for.

<sup>2</sup> 'Love' here is used in the sense of 'desire.' Instinctive desire is unerring, because it is implanted by God ; but rational desire—i. e. that which proceeds from reflection—is liable to err, because it is subject to freewill.

<sup>3</sup> i. e. temporal blessings.

as existing by himself, independently of the source of being, every affection is incapable of hating Him. Thus it follows, if in the distinction here drawn I judge aright, that the evil which a man loves is his neighbour's, and in your earthly nature this love arises in three ways. There are who hope to be exalted through the depression of their neighbour, and solely for this reason desire that he should be abased from his high estate. Others fear the loss of power and favour and honour and fame through another's superiority; and are so distressed thereby that they desire for him the contrary. Some again from wrongs received feel such offence that they thirst for vengeance; and these are wont to devise another's harm. Desire in these three forms is expiated below us<sup>1</sup>; now I would have thee turn thy thoughts toward the other kind, which pursues good in an ill-regulated manner. Every one hath a vague conception of a good wherein the mind may find repose, and doth desire it; this therefore they strive, one and all, to attain. If the love which draws you on toward the knowledge or the acquisition of that good be defective, for this the present Cornice<sup>2</sup> after due repentance torments you. Another form of good<sup>3</sup> there is which doth not make a man happy; it is not happiness, it is not the good essence, which is both the origin and the consummation of every good. The love which surrenders itself overmuch to this is expiated in three Circles above us<sup>4</sup>; but in what way it is spoken of as tripartite, I say not, in order that thou mayst investigate it for thyself.'

<sup>1</sup> In the first three Cornices, where (1) pride, (2) envy, and (3) anger are purged.

<sup>2</sup> The fourth, where sloth is purged.

<sup>3</sup> viz. temporal goods.

<sup>4</sup> The last three Cornices, where Avarice, Gluttony and Lust are purged.

## CANTO XVIII. THE FOURTH CORNICE

The nature  
of love or  
desire.

The illustrious Teacher had concluded his discourse, and was gazing attentively at my face to see whether I appeared content; and I, who was stirred by yet another craving, said to myself, though no word escaped my lips: 'Maybe my repeated questions weary him.' But that guileless Father, who was ware of the timid wish that was undisclosed, by speaking himself gave me confidence to speak. Whereupon I said: 'Master, in thy light my power of sight is so quickened, that I clearly perceive all the points which thy reasoning introduces or describes: wherefore I pray thee, kind and dear Father, to explain to me the nature of love<sup>1</sup>, to which thou dost refer every good action and the contrary thereof.' 'Fix keenly on me,' he said, 'the eyes of thine understanding, and the error of the blind folk who profess themselves leaders will be manifest to thee. The soul<sup>2</sup>, which from its birth is disposed to love, turns readily toward every pleasing object, so soon as by that pleasure it is aroused to activity. Your power of apprehension derives from a real object an image, which it sets forth to view within you, so that it causes the soul to turn towards it. And if, after it hath so turned, it inclines thereto, that inclination is love—it is the natural instinct getting fresh hold on you by reason of the pleasure. Then, even as fire tends upward, because it is of the nature of its essence to rise to that sphere where it abides most in kindred matter<sup>3</sup>; so, when the soul is thus

<sup>1</sup> Here, as in the preceding Canto, 'love' signifies desire generally.

<sup>2</sup> Virgil here proceeds to describe how desire, from being an instinct of the soul, becomes actual desire when the attractive object is presented to it, and finally reaches fruition.

<sup>3</sup> To the sphere of fire; cp. *Purg.* ix. 30.



captured, it is affected by desire—which is a spiritual movement—nor can it rest until it rejoices in possessing the desired object. Now thou canst clearly see, how blind to the truth are the folk <sup>1</sup>, who affirm that every form of love in itself is praiseworthy; for haply desire in general is to be regarded as always good; but, though the wax may be good, not every impression of a seal upon it is good also <sup>2</sup>.

‘Thy words,’ I replied, ‘and my reflection thereupon, have revealed to me the nature of love; but my doubts have been multiplied thereby: for, if love arises in the soul from external objects being presented to it, and is itself the only cause of the soul’s movements, then the soul is not responsible for right or wrong action.’ And he to me: ‘So far as reason is cognizant of this matter, I can explain it to thee; for what lies beyond its sphere place thy hopes in Beatrice alone, since it is a question of faith <sup>3</sup>. Every human soul <sup>4</sup>, which is distinct from matter, and at the same time united with it, hath a specific power <sup>5</sup> gathered into itself, which power is not perceived independently of its working, or otherwise revealed than by its effects, in like manner as the life of a plant is shown by its green leaves. Consequently man is in ignorance as to the origin, both of his knowledge of primary ideas, and of his

The doctrine of free will.

<sup>1</sup> The Epicureans.

<sup>2</sup> i. e. desire is good potentially, but is not necessarily good when it becomes actual desire.

<sup>3</sup> Beatrice represents theology or revealed truth.

<sup>4</sup> The main argument in what follows is this: There is implanted in the soul an instinctive desire for what is good; and, in order that the desires which subsequently arise may harmonize with this, the faculty of judgement exists in the soul, which distinguishes between right and wrong; and the power which men possess of accepting the one of these and rejecting the other involves the freedom of the will.

<sup>5</sup> This specific power is the origin of individuality of character.

liking for the primal objects of desire, which exist in you, as doth the honey-making instinct in the bee ; and this original desire doth not admit of the recompense of praise or blame <sup>1</sup>. Now, in order that with this desire every other desire may harmonize, the power which counsels is innate within you, and should hold the threshold of assent. This is the source whence is derived the cause of merit in you, according as it receives and winnows out good and evil desires. Those who in the process of argument sounded the matter became aware of the innate freedom of the will which this involves ; and consequently they left behind them a system of moral teaching to the world. Hence it may be laid down, that every desire which is kindled within you arises of necessity, but the power of controlling it is in your hands. This supreme power Beatrice understands to be the freedom of the will ; see then that thou bear this in mind, if ever she enters on the subject with thee.'

Spirits rushing onward ;  
examples  
of zeal.

The moon, belated nigh to midnight, in sight like unto a bucket all afire, caused the stars to appear to us less numerous, and was moving against the course of the heavens <sup>2</sup> along that track, which the sun enkindles, when the Romans see him set between Sardinia and Corsica <sup>3</sup> ; and that noble spirit, by reason of whom Pietola surpasses in fame every other Mantuan village <sup>4</sup>, had removed the burden which oppressed me : thus it came to pass that, after receiving a clear and luminous argument on the subject of my questions, I stood like one in a drowsy reverie. But from this somno-

<sup>1</sup> Because it is instinctive.

<sup>2</sup> The daily retardation of the moon is referred to.

<sup>3</sup> The 'track' is the part of the zodiac, viz. the sign of Sagittarius, in which the sun is, when he sets west by south from Rome.

<sup>4</sup> Virgil, who was born at the village of Andes, now Pietola.

lence I was suddenly awakened by folk<sup>1</sup>, who, approaching from behind, had now come round towards us. And as in days' of yore Ismenus and Asopus beheld along their banks by night a furious throng<sup>2</sup>, if haply the Thebans were in need of Bacchus' aid; in such wise, to judge from what I saw, did the spirits, who are of the number of those that are swayed by an upright will and virtuous love, come on, as they circled round that Cornice. In a brief space they reached us, for the whole of that mighty host advanced at full speed; and two of them<sup>3</sup> in front exclaimed with tears: 'Mary sped with haste to the hill country'; and: 'Caesar, that he might subdue Ilerda, attacked Massilia in passing, and then hasted into Spain.' Whereupon the others cried: 'Press on, press on, that no time be lost through defect of love; so may zeal in well-doing quicken God's grace within us.'

'Ye folk, in whom maybe keen ardour now doth com-  
pensate for negligence and delay, which through lukewarmness  
ye introduced into well-doing, this man, who is alive (in  
sooth this is no lie), desires to mount upward so soon as the  
sun renews his light; tell us therefore at what point the  
opening is nigh at hand.' Such were the words my Master  
spake; and one of those spirits replied: 'Follow in our  
wake, and thou wilt find the gap. The desire of movement  
doth so absorb our hearts that we cannot rest; forgive us,  
then, if our longing to make amends appear to thee discourtesy.  
I was Abbot of San Zeno in Verona in the good Barbarossa's

The Abbot  
of San Zeno.

<sup>1</sup> The spirits of the slothful, who atone for their sin by rushing unceasingly round the Cornice.

<sup>2</sup> The Theban revellers, who were wont thus to invoke their patron deity.

<sup>3</sup> These two spirits proclaim the examples of zeal, viz. the Blessed Virgin (Luke i. 39), and Julius Caesar on his march into Spain.

reign, of whom in Milan men still speak with tears<sup>1</sup>; and by reason of that monastery a man<sup>2</sup> who hath already one foot in the grave will ere long lament, and will regret his former influence there, for that in the place of its rightful pastor he hath appointed his son, who is deformed in body, and baser still in mind, and of unseemly birth.' Whether he continued to speak or held his peace I know not, so far beyond us had he already sped; but this I heard, and was well pleased to remember.

Examples of  
lukewarm-  
ness.

Then said he who was mine aid in every need: 'Turn thee in this direction; behold two spirits approaching, who are expressing their repugnance to sloth.' In the rear of the rest they said<sup>3</sup>: 'The folk for whom the sea retired were dead ere Jordan beheld its inheritors'; and again: 'They who would not endure affliction to the end with Anchises' son, consigned themselves to a life of ignominy.' Thereafter, when those shades were so far removed from us that they were out of sight, a fresh thought took form within me, and from this again others, many and various, arose; and from one to another I passed so confusedly, that through wandering of mind I closed mine eyes, and my thoughts were transmuted into a dream.

<sup>1</sup> Because Barbarossa destroyed that city in 1162.

<sup>2</sup> Alberto della Scala of Verona, who made his son Giuseppe, who was lame and illegitimate, abbot of San Zeno.

<sup>3</sup> The examples of lukewarmness are (1) the Israelites in the wilderness, who for their faint-heartedness were not allowed to enter the Promised Land (Num. xiv); and (2) the companions of Aeneas who preferred to remain in Sicily (Virg. *Aen.* v. 751).



## CANTO XIX. THE FIFTH CORNICE

At the hour<sup>1</sup> when the heat of day can no longer temper the chill arising from the moon, being overpowered by the earth, or at times by Saturn<sup>2</sup>; when diviners see their 'greater fortune<sup>3</sup>' rise in the east, before the dawn, by a path which remains but a short time dusk for it: there came to me in a dream<sup>4</sup> a stammering woman, with squinting eyes and deformed legs, maimed in her hands and pallid of complexion. I gazed at her; and even as limbs oppressed by the chill of night are invigorated by the sun, so did my looks give fluency to her tongue, and anon within a brief space completely straitened her, and invested her ghastly face with the hue which love approves. So soon as her tongue was thus unfettered, she began to sing with such dulcet strains that hardly could I have withdrawn my attention from her. 'I am,' she sang, 'I am the sweet Siren, who bewitch mariners on the high seas, so passing delightful is my voice to hear. By my song I turned aside Ulysses from his wandering course; and he that shares my intimacy doth rarely quit me, so full is his contentment.' She had not closed her lips, when, to put her to shame, there appeared hard by me a saintly dame of fervent mien. 'O Virgil, Virgil, who is this?' indignantly she said; and he came on with his eyes engrossed on that august lady. The other woman he seized,

<sup>1</sup> The hour preceding the dawn.

<sup>2</sup> The cold planet.

<sup>3</sup> *Fortuna major* was the name of a certain arrangement of spots on the ground by which wizards divined; here it is used of a corresponding group of stars.

<sup>4</sup> This dream represents the deceptiveness of worldly objects of attraction.

and rending apart her robes disclosed her front, and pointed to her paunch; and through the stench which proceeded therefrom I woke.

The Angel  
of the fourth  
Cornice.

Toward the kind Master I turned mine eyes, and he said: 'Three times and more have I called thee; arise and come; let us find the opening whereby thou mayst enter.' I rose; and lo! all the Cornices of the holy Mountain were already illuminated by the full daylight, and the newly risen sun was behind us as we went. While I was following him with a downward brow, even as one who, burdened by his thoughts, curves like the arch of a bridge in half its span, I heard the words, 'Come ye, here is the passage,' uttered in sweet and gentle tones, the like of which in our earthly realm are all unknown. Unfolding his wings, which resembled swans' wings, he who thus addressed us<sup>1</sup> directed us upward between the two walls of the hard rock. Thereupon he waved his plumes and fanned us therewith, affirming the while that they who mourn are blessed, for with comfort their souls shall be induced.

Virgil  
interprets  
the dream.

'What ails thee, that thine eyes are ever fixed on the ground?' such were the opening words which my Guide addressed to me, when we two had mounted for a space above the Angel. And I: 'That which causes me such misgivings as I walk, is a new vision, which allures me so that I cannot abstract myself from the thought thereof.' 'Hast thou beheld,' he said, 'that ancient witch, who is the sole cause of the sufferings which remain now to be seen above us? Hast seen how man can liberate himself from her? Enough! press vigorously forward; turn thine eyes toward the lure, which the eternal King with His mighty spheres causes to revolve before thee.' As the falcon, which at first is gazing

<sup>1</sup> The Angel of the fourth Cornice.

at his feet, afterward turns him to the cry of the prey, and reaches forth through the longing for his food which attracts him toward it ; so was it with me, and in such a spirit I pursued my way, as far as the rock is cleft to afford a passage to one ascending, till I attained the point where the circling course commences.

So soon as I had come forth clear on to the fifth Cornice, I beheld throughout it folk who wept, as they lay upon the earth facing completely downward. 'My soul cleaveth to the dust,' I heard them say with sighs so deep that the words were hardly audible. 'Ye elect of God, whose sufferings hope and the sense of justice alleviate, direct us on our way toward the steep ascents.' 'If ye come here exempt from prostration, and desire more speedily to find the way, let your right hands be ever on the outer side.' Such was the Poet's request, and such the answer which came from one of them a short space in front of us ; wherefore by his words I became aware of his person which was hidden from me<sup>1</sup>, and then I turned mine eyes toward my Lord : whereupon with a glad sign he granted what my eager looks requested. Being able now to dispose of myself at will, I drew near to that being whose words had erst attracted my attention, saying : 'Thou spirit, in whom lamentation matures that disposition, without which it is impossible to return to God, for my sake suspend a moment thy absorbing task. Tell me who thou wast, and wherefore your backs are upward turned, and whether it be thy wish that I should obtain aught for thee in the world which I left while still alive.' And he to me<sup>2</sup> : 'Wherefore heaven causes us to turn our backs upon it, thou shalt be told ;

The fifth  
Cornice, of  
avarice ;  
Pope  
Adrian V.

<sup>1</sup> Because he lay face downward.

<sup>2</sup> The speaker is Pope Adrian V, who was elected in 1276, and held the office only thirty-nine days.

but first be it known to thee that I was a successor of Peter. Between Sestri and Chiavari there flows down a fair river<sup>1</sup>, in the name whereof the title of my family doth glory. For little more than a month I felt how heavy the great mantle lies on him who would guard it from the mire, so that in comparison thereof every other burden seems like down. My conversion, alas ! was long deferred, but when I was created Pastor of Rome the falsity of life was revealed to me. Then saw I that in that position the heart had no contentment, nor in the life on earth could a higher stage be reached ; wherefore the desire of this life was kindled within me. Up to that moment I was a miserable soul, alienated from God, consumed by avarice ; now, as thou seest, I here receive the punishment thereof. The effect of avarice is here revealed by the mode in which the repentant souls are purged, and the Mountain hath no bitterer punishment to show. As our eyes, being fixed on earthly things, refused to soar on high, so hath justice here abased them to earth. As avarice extinguished our love of every good, so that all power of action was lost to us, so doth justice here hold us in fetters, fast bound hand and foot ; and so long as it pleases the righteous Lord outstretched and motionless shall we abide.'

Earthly  
distinctions  
cease with  
death.

I had fallen on my knees, and would have spoken ; but so soon as I commenced, and he was ware, though through the ear alone, of my obeisance, 'What motive,' he cried, 'hath caused thee thus to kneel ?' And I to him : 'By reason of your dignity my conscience pricked me for my upright posture.' 'Stand erect, brother, arise,' he replied : 'deceive not thyself ; with thee and with thy brethren I am a fellow servant of the selfsame Power. If ever thou didst understand that holy

<sup>1</sup> The Lavagna on the eastern Riviera. Adrian's family were Counts of Lavagna.



gospel utterance, which saith : "They shall not marry<sup>1</sup>," thou canst clearly see wherefore I use these words. Now go thy way ; I will not have thee tarry longer, for thy staying here disturbs my lamentation, whereby I am maturing that whereof thou spakest. A niece I have in yonder world, Alagia by name, good in herself, if so be our house by its example corrupt her not ; and she alone doth there remain to me<sup>2</sup>.

## CANTO XX. THE FIFTH CORNICE

Ill strives the will against a better will ; wherefore, to please him, though being myself ill pleased, I drew forth from the water the sponge which thirsted for more<sup>3</sup>. I set forth ; and my Guide advanced through the unoccupied spots nigh to the rock, as men pass along a wall close to the battlements ; for in the other direction, the folk who distil through their eyes drop by drop the all-pervading vice of avarice, approach too near to the outside. A curse light upon thee, ancient she-wolf, who by reason of thine unsatiable hunger hast more victims than any other beast. Thou heaven, by whose rotation, we know, men believe that the fortunes of this lower world are changed, when will the man arise by whom this monster shall be expelled ?

We proceeded with lingering steps and slow, and I was listening to the shades, whom I heard piteously lamenting and making moan, when, as it chanced, the invocation 'Sweet

The curse  
of avarice.

Examples of  
poverty and  
liberality.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxii. 30, 'In the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage'; in the present application the words are used in a more general sense, to signify that after death all earthly distinctions cease.

<sup>2</sup> Adrian mentions her, in order that Dante may request her to pray for him.

<sup>3</sup> i. e. I ceased from asking further questions.

Mary' fell on mine ear<sup>1</sup>, uttered in front of us with a tearful cry like that of a woman in travail; and further: 'How poor thou wast, that hostel<sup>2</sup> testifies, where thou didst lay down thy holy burden.' Anon I heard: 'O good Fabricius<sup>3</sup>, thou didst prefer virtue with poverty for thy possession, rather than great riches with iniquity.' So grateful were these words to me, that I moved forward to acquaint myself with the spirit from whom they seemed to come: and he went on to tell how Nicolas bounteously dowered the maidens, to direct their young lives toward good fame<sup>4</sup>.

Hugh Capet  
and his  
descendants.

'Thou spirit, who utterest these gracious words,' I said, 'tell me who thou wast, and wherefore thou alone dost renew these worthy praises. That which thou sayest shall not be unrewarded, if I return to complete the brief journey of that life which hastens to its close.' And he: 'I will tell thee, not for the sake of aid which I expect from thence, but because such wondrous grace before thy death doth manifest itself in thee. I was the root of the evil tree, which casts over the whole Christian land a shade so blighting, that good fruit is rarely gathered therefrom<sup>5</sup>. But, if Douai and Lille and Ghent and Bruges availed to strike, vengeance would speedily arise<sup>6</sup>; and for this I pray to Him who judges all. On yonder earth Hugh Capet was the name I bore; from

<sup>1</sup> The examples of the virtue appropriate to this Cornice which are here recited are the Blessed Virgin, Fabricius and St. Nicolas.

<sup>2</sup> The stable at Bethlehem.

<sup>3</sup> Fabricius, the Roman consul, refused the bribes of Pyrrhus, and died in poverty.

<sup>4</sup> St. Nicolas of Myra portioned three sisters in order to save them from a life of infamy. He is an example of liberality.

<sup>5</sup> The speaker, Hugh Capet, proceeds to expose the covetousness of his descendants.

<sup>6</sup> The reference is to the cruel treatment of Flanders by Phillip the Fair in 1299.

me descended the Philips and the Louis by whom France hath of late been governed. Of a butcher of Paris I was the son<sup>1</sup>. When the line of the ancient kings expired, save one who assumed the monastic garb, my hands, I found, had so tight a grip of the reins of government of the kingdom, and my newly acquired power was so great, and so well provided was I with friends, that unto the widowed crown my son's head was promoted, from whom the consecrated lineage of the aforementioned sovereigns commenced. Up to the time when through the great dower of Provence<sup>2</sup> the sense of shame was lost to my race, though its power was small it did no wrong. At that point commenced their career of rapine accompanied by force and fraud<sup>3</sup>; and thereafter they seized Ponthieu and Normandy and Gascony<sup>4</sup> in compensation<sup>5</sup>. Charles came into Italy, and, in compensation, sacrificed Conradin<sup>6</sup>; and anon he sped Thomas on his way homeward to heaven<sup>7</sup>, in compensation. I see the time, at this moment not far off, when another Charles<sup>8</sup> proceeds from France, to

<sup>1</sup> In this and the following sentence Dante has fallen into a confusion between Hugh Capet and his father Hugh the Great.

<sup>2</sup> Provence was added to the kingdom of France through the marriage of Charles of Anjou with the daughter of Raymond Berenger, Count of Provence.

<sup>3</sup> Poitou and the kingdom of Navarre were annexed in the reign of Philip the Bold (1270-85).

<sup>4</sup> Gascony and Ponthieu were obtained by Philip the Fair (1285-1314), and in his reign the English claim on Normandy was renounced.

<sup>5</sup> This thrice-repeated expression implies that the kings of France made amends for crime by committing greater crimes.

<sup>6</sup> Charles of Anjou defeated Conradin, the last of the Hohenstaufen, at Tagliacozzo, and afterwards executed him.

<sup>7</sup> The story that St. Thomas Aquinas was poisoned by Charles's orders was believed in Dante's time.

<sup>8</sup> Charles of Valois, who was invited to settle the disorders of Florence, and came into Italy in 1301.

reveal the true character of himself and his followers. Unarmed he comes forth alone, bearing the lance wherewith Judas combated<sup>1</sup>; and with this he deals so violent a thrust, that the vitals of Florence are rent thereby. Thence he shall win not land but sin and shame, more grievous for himself, in proportion as he makes light of such-like crimes. The third<sup>2</sup>, who, having been taken prisoner from his vessel, was lately set free, I behold selling his daughter under a bargain, as do the corsairs with other female slaves. O avarice, what lower depth hast thou in store for us, now that thou hast so mastered mine offspring, that they take no thought for their own flesh and blood? In order that their crimes, past and future, may be cast into the shade, I see the *fleur-de-lis* enter Alagna, and Christ made captive in the person of his Vicar<sup>3</sup>. I see him once more derided; I see the vinegar and gall renewed, and himself done to death between living robbers. I see the new Pilate so merciless, that this doth not content him, but, unauthorized, he directs the sails of his cupidity against the Temple<sup>4</sup>. O Lord my God, when shall I be gladdened by the sight of that vengeance, which, though shrouded from us, causes thine anger to repose peacefully in thy secret counsels?

Examples of  
avarice.

‘That which I said concerning the one and only spouse of the Holy Spirit<sup>5</sup>, and which caused thee to betake thyself to

<sup>1</sup> Treachery.

<sup>2</sup> Charles II, King of Apulia. He was taken prisoner by Roger di Lauria, admiral of Peter of Aragon, in an engagement in 1284, and was released in 1288. He gave his young daughter in marriage to the aged Marquis of Este, Azzo VIII, on consideration of receiving a large sum of money.

<sup>3</sup> Boniface VIII was insultingly treated by the agents of Philip the Fair at Anagni in 1303.

<sup>4</sup> Philip the Fair proceeded against the Order of the Templars in 1307.

<sup>5</sup> Hugh Capet’s mention above of the poverty of the Virgin.



me for an explanation, serves for an answer to all our prayers so long as the day lasts; but when night falls, instead thereof we take up the contrary strain<sup>1</sup>. Then we repeat Pygmalion's name<sup>2</sup>, who through his unbridled lust of gold became a traitor, a robber, and a murderer of his kin; and the avaricious Midas' misery, the result of his covetous request<sup>3</sup>, which never fails to raise a smile. Anon each one recalls to mind how the foolish Achan stole the spoils<sup>4</sup>, so that here Joshua's stern sentence seems to afflict him still. Thereafter we censure Sapphira and her spouse<sup>5</sup>; we approve the hoof-beats which Heliodorus received<sup>6</sup>; and throughout the circuit of the Mountain the infamy of Polydorus' murderer Polymestor<sup>7</sup> is proclaimed. Finally the cry is raised: "Tell us, Crassus, for thou knowest, what is the flavour of gold<sup>8</sup>?" At times the voice of one is loud, of another low, according to the feeling which incites us to speak now with stronger, now with weaker tones: hence, in proclaiming but now the virtuous acts which we rehearse here by day, I was not alone; but no other person in this neighbourhood raised his voice.'

<sup>1</sup> i. e. we recite the examples of avarice.

<sup>2</sup> Dido's brother, who killed her husband Sychaeus for the sake of his possessions; Virg. *Aen.* i. 346-52.

<sup>3</sup> The disastrous effect of his turning whatever he touched into gold; Ovid, *Met.* xi. 106-30.

<sup>4</sup> Joshua vii. 16-25.

<sup>5</sup> Acts v. 1-11.

<sup>6</sup> When Heliodorus attempted to rob the treasury at Jerusalem, a horse appeared, which smote at him with its forefeet; 2 Macc. iii. 25.

<sup>7</sup> Polymestor murdered Priam's son Polydorus, in order to obtain the gold which had been entrusted to him along with him; Virg. *Aen.* iii. 49-57.

<sup>8</sup> After the defeat of Crassus in Parthia, the king of that country caused molten gold to be poured down his throat in contempt of his rapacity.

The Mountain is shaken.

We had already left him, and were striving to traverse the road with what speed our powers allowed, when I was ware that the Mountain quaked as it would fall; whereat a chill came over me, like that which seizes a man who is being led to death. Delos in sooth was not so violently shaken, ere Latona made there her nest, to give birth to the two eyes of heaven<sup>1</sup>. Then there commenced on every side a burst of sound, so loud that my Master drew close to me, saying: 'Fear not, while I am thy guide.' 'Glory to God in the highest' was what they all uttered, as I discovered from those near me, from whose lips I could distinguish the words of the cry. Motionless and preoccupied we stood, like the shepherds who first heard that song<sup>2</sup>, until the quaking ceased and the chant was concluded. Anon we resumed our pilgrimage, watching the shades extended on the earth, who now had returned to their wonted lamentation. No ignorance ever excited in me so keenly the longing for information, if my memory is not here at fault, as that which methought I then felt when reflecting on these things; yet owing to our speed I ventured not to inquire, nor of myself could I discover aught in the matter: so in timid and thoughtful mood I pursued my way.

## CANTO XXI. THE FIFTH CORNICE

The poet Statius.

The natural thirst distressed me, which is never quenched save by that water<sup>3</sup>, the boon whereof the Samaritan woman craved; and our rapid course impelled me in my Leader's

<sup>1</sup> Apollo and Diana—the Sun and the Moon.

<sup>2</sup> The shepherds of Bethlehem.

<sup>3</sup> The living water, or spiritual truth.

footsteps along the obstructed road, and I was compassionating those who endure that righteous punishment; when lo! in like manner as Luke<sup>1</sup> records that Christ, when now he had risen from the chamber of the dead, appeared to the two disciples on their way, there appeared a shade, who followed behind us, regarding the crowd of prostrate spirits at his feet; nor were we ware of his presence until he spake first, saying: 'My brothers, God grant you peace.' Instantly we turned, and Virgil replied to him with the corresponding greeting<sup>2</sup>. Then he thus began: 'May the infallible tribunal, which consigns me to eternal banishment, place thee in peace in the company of the Blessed.' 'How?' said he, the while we were speeding on our way, 'if ye be shades whom God doth not admit to his realm on high, who hath guided you so far along his stairway?' And my Teacher: 'If thou givest heed to the marks which this one bears, and which the Angel is wont to trace, thou wilt clearly perceive that he is destined for the kingdom of the Saints<sup>3</sup>. But, seeing that she who spins both by day and night had not yet drawn off for him all the flax, which Clotho places for each on the distaff and packs together<sup>4</sup>, his soul, which is thy sister and mine, could not pursue its upward course alone, inasmuch as it sees not things as we do. Wherefore I was summoned forth from the wide gorge of Hell to show him the way, and this I shall continue to do, so far as my knowledge may avail to lead him. But tell us, if so be thou knowest, wherefore

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxiv. 13 foll.

<sup>2</sup> viz. 'and to thy spirit.'

<sup>3</sup> As Purgatory was preparatory to Heaven, the P's on Dante's forehead proved that he was destined for Heaven.

<sup>4</sup> i. e. since he is still alive. Of the three Fates Clotho placed the flax (the allotted term of life) on the distaff, and Lachesis spun the thread of life.

but now the Mountain quaked so violently, and wherefore all its denizens down to its wave-washed base seemed with one voice to raise a cry.'

The cause  
of the  
earthquake.

His question hit so faithfully the needle's eye of my desire, that by the mere hope the keenness of my thirst was moderated. The other then began : ' Nothing is affected irregularly by the divinely appointed system of the Mountain, or is exceptional. All things in this realm are free from variations of whatsoever kind ; the cause of such an occurrence here can proceed from a soul being received by Heaven into itself through its own agency, but from that alone : wherefore no rain, nor hail, nor snow, nor yet dew, nor hoar-frost falls above the brief stairway which the three steps form. No clouds are seen there, whether dense or thin ; no lightning flash, nor Thaumás' daughter <sup>1</sup>, who in yonder world oftentimes shifts her region. Dry vapour <sup>2</sup> rises not beyond the highest of the three steps whereof I spake, on which Peter's deputy rests his feet. Below that limit the earth may quake more or less violently ; but here above no trembling was ever produced by the wind which from some occult cause is confined within the earth. It doth tremble here, when a soul feels itself pure, so that it rises or starts on its upward way ; and then that cry accompanies it. The evidence of its purification is furnished by the higher will alone, which seizes the soul, when it is wholly free to change its company ; and the soul rejoices in exercising that will. Ere that, it hath the righteous desire to rise, but the lower will prevents it, which the justice of God fixes on the purgatorial suffering, even as it was previously fixed on the sin, in opposition to the higher will. And so I, who have lain prostrate in this anguish five hundred years and

<sup>1</sup> Iris, the rainbow.

<sup>2</sup> This, according to Aristotle, was one of the causes of earthquakes.



more, felt but now the unchecked desire of a better abode. 'This is why thou didst feel the earthquake, and hear the devout spirits throughout the Mountain rendering thanks to the Lord: may He, I pray, soon bid them ascend on high!' Thus spake he; and since the pleasure of drinking is proportionate to the thirst, no words of mine can tell how great delight he caused me. And my wise Leader said: 'Now I perceive the net which holds you here, and how one escapes therefrom, and moreover the cause of the earthquake, and the reason of your common rejoicing. Prithee tell me further who thou wast, and let thy words inform me wherefore thou hast lain here so many centuries.'

'At the time when the good Titus by the aid of the supreme King avenged the wounds, whence issued the blood which Judas sold,' that spirit replied, 'in yonder world I bore the title which lasts longest and bestows most honour', in fame renowned, but as yet devoid of faith. So sweet was my gift of song, that being a citizen of Toulouse, I was invited to Rome, where I was deemed worthy to have my brows decorated with the myrtle crown. Statius is the name whereby in the land of the living I still am called: I sang of Thebes, and anon of the great Achilles, but I sank on the way under the second burden<sup>2</sup>. The source of my inspiration was the enkindling sparks of the divine flame, whereby thousands have been enlightened—the *Aeneid* I mean, which was the mother and the nurse of my poetic art; apart from it I had not a feather's weight. Aye, to have lived on earth in Virgil's age, I would agree to remain a year beyond the time appointed for my escape from exile.' At these words Virgil

Statius does  
homage to  
Virgil.

<sup>1</sup> The name of poet.

<sup>2</sup> Statius' chief works which were known to Dante were his *Thebaid* and *Achilleid*, but he died before completing the latter of these.

turned toward me with a look which mutely said: 'Hold thy peace'; but there are things which the power of will cannot compass; for smiles and tears follow so closely on the feelings whence they respectively arise, that in the most truthful spirits they are least at the will's command. In sooth I smiled, a smile of intelligence; whereupon the shade ceased speaking, and looked me in the eyes, where expression mostly dwells. Then said he: 'So mayst thou accomplish well thy great task, tell me why thy face just now revealed to me a flashing smile.' Now am I in straits betwixt the two; one bids me hold my peace, the other adjures me to speak; whereat I sigh, and my Master, who heard the sigh, said to me: 'Fear not to speak; nay speak, and tell him what he so eagerly inquires.' Anon I said: 'Maybe thou wonderest, thou ancient spirit, at the smile which crossed my lips; but I have a still greater marvel in store for thee. This one, who guides mine eyes aloft, is that Virgil, who gifted thee with the power to sing of gods and men. If to any other cause thou didst attribute my smile, put that aside as untrue, and ascribe it to thy words concerning him.' Already he was bending to embrace my Teacher's feet; but he said: 'Do it not, brother; thou art a shade, and it is a shade thou seest.' Then he arose, and said: 'Now thou mayst conceive the intensity of that love wherewith I burn for thee, when I forget our unreality, and would handle a shade as it were a solid body.'

## CANTO XXII. 'THE SIXTH CORNICE

The Angel  
of the fifth  
Cornice.

Already the Angel had been left behind us—the Angel who had directed us toward the sixth Circle, after obliterating one of the strokes upon my face; and he had pronounced for

us those to be blessed whose desires are fixed on righteousness, and his words completed that saying with 'Who thirst,' adding nothing thereto<sup>1</sup>. And I, feeling lighter than in the former passages, was walking with such ease, that I followed the fleet spirits upward without fatigue, when Virgil thus began: 'Love, when kindled by virtue, doth ever excite reciprocal love, provided that its flame appear outwardly. And so, from what time Juvenal, who revealed to me thy affection, descended among us into the Limbus of Hell, my good will toward thee was as great as ever possessed a man for one not seen, so that now these steps will seem to me but a brief ascent. But tell me—and as a friend forgive me, if too great confidence makes me overbold, and now as a friend converse with me—how came it to pass, that with all the wisdom, whereof through thy diligence thou hadst great store, avarice found a place within thy heart?'

At first these words raised a faint smile on Statius' face; anon he made reply: 'Thine every word is a precious token of love to me. In sooth things oftentimes present themselves to us, which furnish subjects for doubt that are untrue owing to the true causes being concealed. Thy question proves to me that it is thy belief that I was avaricious in the other life, perchance because of the Circle where I was. Now I would have thee know, that avarice was too far removed from me, and this excess thousands of revolutions of the moon have punished. And had it not been that I rectified my views of life, when I pondered on the passage where thou dost exclaim,

Opposite  
vices are  
expiated  
together.

<sup>1</sup> The full Beatitude here is, 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness,' but that part of it which refers to hunger is reserved for the sixth Cornice, where gluttony is expiated. In the present Cornice the thirst for righteousness or just dealing is regarded as the antidote to the thirst for wealth.

as if indignant against human nature : "Through what a course of wickedness dost thou not lead the desires of men, accursed lust of gold<sup>1</sup>?" rolling the weights I should be experiencing the dismal jousts<sup>2</sup>. Then I became aware that the hands might be too lavish in expenditure, and I repented of that along with my other sins. How many will rise again with their hair shorn<sup>3</sup>, by reason of ignorance, which prevents repentance for this sin during men's lifetime and at their last hour! Know also, that the transgression which is the direct opposite of any sin, dries its green rankness<sup>4</sup> here in company with that sin : wherefore, if with a view to my purification I abode among the folk who suffer for avarice, this hath befallen me owing to its opposite.'

Virgil the  
cause of  
Statius' con-  
version.

'When thou didst sing of the merciless war of Jocasta's twin affliction<sup>5</sup>,' said the bard of the bucolic strains, 'to judge from that whereof by Clio's aid thou there dost treat, the faith without which good deeds avail not had not yet, I ween, made thee a true believer<sup>6</sup>. If this be so, what light from heaven or earth dispersed thy darkness so, that thou didst thereafter set thy sails in the Fisherman's<sup>7</sup> wake?' And he replied : "'Twas thou, who didst first direct me toward Parnassus to drink within its grot, and then, next

<sup>1</sup> Virg. *Aen.* iii. 56, 57. 'Quid non mortalia pectora cogis, Auri sacra fames?' but Dante's interpretation of the passage is not clear.

<sup>2</sup> i. e. I should be suffering the punishment of the avaricious and the prodigal in Hell; cp. *Inf.* vii.

<sup>3</sup> This was an emblem of extravagance.

<sup>4</sup> Reduces its superfluity.

<sup>5</sup> The war between Polynices and Eteocles, the twin sons of Jocasta, who were of incestuous birth. This was the subject of Statius' *Thebaid*.

<sup>6</sup> i. e. Statius had not been converted to Christianity when he wrote the *Thebaid*.

<sup>7</sup> St. Peter.



after God, didst enlighten me. Thou didst play the part of one, who, walking by night, carries behind him a light, which benefits him not, but directs those who follow him, when thou saidst: "The age begins anew; justice returns and man's primal era, and a new progeny descends from heaven <sup>1</sup>." Through thee I was a poet, through thee a Christian; but that thou mayst see more clearly what I sketch in outline, I will set my hand to fill it in in colour. Already the whole wide world was impregnated with the true faith, which had been sown by the messengers of the eternal kingdom, and thy above-mentioned saying in sooth was in harmony with the new preachers' doctrines; thus it befell that I was wont to consort with them. Anon they grew so saintly in mine eyes, that when Domitian persecuted them, their sufferings did not fail to move me to tears; and so long as I remained on yonder earth I aided them, and the uprightness of their lives caused me to esteem lightly all other schools; and ere I brought the Argives to the Theban rivers in my poem <sup>2</sup> I received baptism: but through cowardice I was a concealed Christian, for a long while professing paganism, by reason of which lukewarmness I was condemned for four hundred years and more to make the circuit of the fourth Circle. Do thou then, who hast lifted the veil whereby all the blessing whereof I speak was hidden from me, tell me during the remainder of our ascent, if thou knowest, where Terence, our early poet, and where Caecilius, Plautus and Varro are: tell me if they are among the damned, and in what section of them.' 'They, and Persius, and I myself and many more,' my Leader replied, 'are in the company of that Greek <sup>3</sup> whom the Muses fostered

<sup>1</sup> Virg. *Ecl.* iv. 5-7.

<sup>2</sup> i. e. ere I reached the latter part of the *Thebaid*.

<sup>3</sup> Homer.

beyond all others, in the first Circle of the gloomy prison. Oftentimes we converse about the mountain <sup>1</sup> where our foster-mothers ever dwell. Euripides is in our number there and Antiphon, Simonides, Agathon, and many another Greek, whose brows erewhile were decked with bay. There from among thy personages may be seen Antigone, Deiphile and Argea, and Ismene in sadness as of yore. There is seen the dame who pointed out Langia <sup>2</sup>; and Teiresias' daughter withal <sup>3</sup>, and Thetis, and Deidamia in company with her sisters.'

The sixth  
Cornice, of  
gluttony;  
examples of  
temperance.

The two poets had now ceased from speaking, being once more occupied in gazing around, when the ascent and the walls of rock no longer impeded them; and already four hand-maidens of the day <sup>4</sup> had passed, and the fifth was at the pole of the car, directing ever upward its blazing point, when my Leader said: 'Methinks we ought to turn our right side toward the outer edge, following in our wonted direction the curve of the Mountain.' Thus habit was there our guide, and on the strength of that noble spirit's approval we started more confidently on the way. They walked in front, and I by myself behind, the while I listened to their discourse, which gave me insight into the poetic art. But soon that sweet parley was interrupted by a tree, with fine sweet-scented fruit, which met our eyes midway in the road. And as a fir doth taper upward from branch to branch, so did that tree taper downward, to prevent its being ascended, as I divine. On the side toward which our road was enclosed there dripped

<sup>1</sup> Helicon, which was sacred to the Muses.

<sup>2</sup> Hypsipyle, who showed the spring of Langia to Adrastus and his army, when they were in need of water; Stat. *Theb.* iv. 716 foll.

<sup>3</sup> Manto, whom by an oversight Dante in *Inf.* xx. 55 places in Malebolge.

Four hours.

from the high rock a limpid moisture, which diffused itself among the leaves above. As the two Poets drew nigh to the tree, a voice within the foliage exclaimed: 'Of this food ye shall not partake<sup>1</sup>.' Anon it said<sup>2</sup>: 'Mary took more thought for the marriage feast being seemly and complete, than for her own lips<sup>3</sup>, which now intercede for you. Also the Roman women of old were content with water for their drink, and Daniel disdained meat and won for himself wisdom<sup>4</sup>. The primal age, which was fair as gold, found in hunger a relish for acorns, and by the aid of thirst nectar in every brook. Locusts and honey were the food which supported the Baptist in the wilderness; wherefore glory is his meed, and that high dignity which the Gospel doth set forth to you.'

### CANTO XXIII. THE SIXTH CORNICE

While I was peering through the green foliage, as doth the man who wastes his time in pursuing little birds, my more than father said to me: 'Come on now, dear son; our allotted time should be more profitably apportioned.' I turned mine eyes, and not less promptly my steps, to follow the Sages, whose discourse was so enchanting that it compensated the weariness of the way. And lo! the words 'O Lord, open thou my lips' were heard in strains so mournful and so sweet, that they begat at once delight and grief. 'Beloved Father,' I began, 'what is that which I hear?' And he:

The punishment inflicted by hunger and thirst.

<sup>1</sup> The sin of gluttony is expiated in this Cornice by the pangs of hunger and thirst, which are excited by the sight of attractive food.

<sup>2</sup> These are the examples of the virtue of temperance.

<sup>3</sup> At the marriage at Cana of Galilee Mary said 'They have no wine,' John ii. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Dan. i. 11, 12, 17.

‘They are shades pursuing their way, who haply are freeing them from the bonds of their debt.’ As is the wont of pensive pilgrims, who, when they overtake stranger folk on the road, turn toward them but do not halt, so did a company of spirits, devout and mute, coming from behind with more rapid steps and passing us, regard us with looks of wonder. All of them were dark about the eyes and hollow, pale in face, and so lean that the skin followed the shape of the bones. Erysichthon<sup>1</sup>, I ween, was not so dried up to merest rind through starvation, when his fear thereof was at its greatest. I said to myself in thought: ‘Behold the folk who lost Jerusalem, what time Mary preyed on her own child<sup>2</sup>. The sockets of their eyes resembled rings devoid of jewels; he that in the human face reads *omo*, would here have clearly recognized the *m*<sup>3</sup>. Who would believe that the scent of an apple, or that of a liquid, could produce this result by exciting a craving, if he knew not how it came to pass?’

Forese  
Donati.

I was wondering what could famish them so, since the reason of their leanness and their sadly withered flesh was not yet clear, when lo! from the depths of his head a shade turned his eyes upon me, and gazed attentively; anon he exclaimed aloud: ‘What gracious boon is mine!’ By his face I should not a whit have recognized him; but by his

<sup>1</sup> A Thessalian, who cut down trees in a grove sacred to Demeter, and was punished by her with insatiable hunger.

<sup>2</sup> The story of the mother who ate her own child during the final siege of Jerusalem is told by Josephus *Bell. Jud.* vi. 3, 4.

<sup>3</sup> It was a mediaeval conceit, that the title ‘man’ (*omo*, Lat. *homo*) was written in the human face, the eyes being the two *o*’s, the nose with the eyebrows and cheekbones the *m*. In the case of these spirits the hollows of the eyes made the bones which enclosed them more conspicuous.



voice was revealed to me that which his aspect had suppressed within it. This spark quickened anew and to the full my knowledge of the altered lineaments, and I recalled to mind Forese's<sup>1</sup> face. 'Ah, pay no heed to the parched and withered surface which discolours my skin'—such was his appeal—'nor to my lack of flesh; but tell me the truth concerning thyself, and say who those two spirits are who there form thy escort; be not remiss in speaking to me.' 'Thy face, which I bewailed erewhile as dead,' I replied, 'moves me now no less to tears, when I behold it so disfigured. Tell me then, in God's name, what it is which thus withers you; force me not to speak when full of wonderment, for the man who is preoccupied expresses his thoughts but ill. And he to me: 'From the eternal Counsel virtue descends into the water, and into the tree which we have left in our rear, and this it is which attenuates me thus. All this folk who chant so mournfully, because they pursued gluttony beyond measure, in hunger and thirst are here restored to saintliness. The scent which proceeds from the fruit, and from the sprinkling water which diffuses itself over the foliage, kindles in us the craving for food and drink: and not once only, as we make the circuit of this area, is our punishment renewed—punishment I call it, but I should rather say our solace—for the same desire<sup>2</sup> doth conduct us to the tree, which moved Christ to say with joy: "Eli," when by his blood he won our freedom.'

And I to him: 'Forese, from the day when thou didst migrate to a better life up to the present time five years have not run their course. If the power of committing further

Immodesty  
of the  
Florentine  
women.

<sup>1</sup> Forese Donati, an early friend of Dante, and a relation of Dante's wife, Gemma Donati.

<sup>2</sup> The desire to conform our wills to the will of God.

sin came to an end in thee ere the hour of pious penitence which reunites us with God arrived, how comes it that thou hast ascended here? Methought I should find thee still below<sup>1</sup>, where loss of time is compensated by delay.' And he replied: 'It is my Nella, who by her bursts of tears hath led me so soon to drink of the sweet wormwood of these pains. She by her devout prayers and sighs hath removed me from the mountain side, the place of waiting, and hath set me free from the other Circles. My sweet widow, whom I so greatly loved, is more precious in God's sight and dear to Him in proportion as she stands alone in her good works; for in respect of its women the Barbagia of Sardinia<sup>2</sup> is far more modest than that Barbagia where I left her<sup>3</sup>. Beloved brother, what more can I say? Even now a coming time is within my range of vision, a time to which the present will not seem far remote, when the shameless Florentine women shall be forbidden from the pulpit to expose their bosoms, as they walk, even to the teats. What Berber women<sup>4</sup> were there ever, what Saracen women, who needed correction, whether spiritual or otherwise, to force them to conceal their persons? But did those bold-faced dames know assuredly what the swift heavens are laying up in store for them, even now their mouths would be opened wide to howl; for, if in this matter my forecasts deceive me not, they shall be sad, ere he who now is quieted by lullaby hath bearded cheeks. Now prithee, brother, conceal from me no longer the truth concerning thyself; thou seest how not I alone, but all this folk are gazing at the spot where thou dost intercept the sun.'

<sup>1</sup> In Ante-Purgatory.

<sup>2</sup> A district of Sardinia inhabited by a wild and dissolute race.

<sup>3</sup> Florence.

<sup>4</sup> Women of Barbary in northern Africa.

So I replied: 'If thou dost recall to mind what were thy relations to me and mine to thee, the recollection thereof will even now be painful'. From that course of life did he that walks in front of me convert me, a few days past, when the sister of that luminary'—and I pointed to the sun—'displayed to you her full orb. He hath conducted me through the depths of night, wearing the real flesh which follows him, from among those who are dead indeed. Thence his encouragements have drawn me upward, ascending and circling round the Mountain that restores your uprightness which the world distorted. Anon he engages to accompany me till I reach the spot where Beatrice shall be found; there I must needs be bereaved of him. The one who promises me this'—and I indicated him—'is Virgil; the other is the shade, on whose account your realm, which discharges him from its keeping, quaked but now throughout all its declivities.'

Dante and Forese.

## CANTO XXIV. THE SIXTH CORNICE

The discourse stayed not our progress, nor the progress our discourse, but as we conversed we walked with speed, like a ship impelled by a favouring wind. The shades the while, which looked like things twice dead, through the sockets of their eyes expressed their marvel at me, having learnt that I was alive. Then continuing my address I said: 'Mayhap for others' sake he<sup>2</sup> pursues his way upward more slowly than he otherwise would do. But tell me, if thou knowest, where Piccarda<sup>3</sup> is; tell me moreover whether amid this

The poet Bonagiunta of Lucca.

<sup>1</sup> The correspondence between Dante and Forese in the form of sonnets, which still exist, is vituperative and implies careless living.

<sup>2</sup> Statius.

<sup>3</sup> Forese's sister. Dante afterwards meets her in the first sphere of Paradise.

folk who gaze at me so I see any noteworthy person.' 'My sister, of whom I know not whether she were more virtuous or more fair, already rejoices triumphantly in her crown in Olympus on high.' Thus he commenced, and then continued: 'Here there is naught to prevent our naming each, seeing that by our abstinence our likeness is so effaced. This one'—and he pointed with his finger—'is Bonagiunta<sup>1</sup>, Bonagiunta of Lucca; and he<sup>2</sup> on yonder side of him, whose face is emaciated beyond the others, held Holy Church in his embrace: from Tours he came, and by fasting he atones for the eels of Bolsena and the vernage wine.' Many others did he name to me one by one; and all seemed pleased when their names were mentioned, so that I perceived not one dark look in consequence. I saw Ubaldin dalla Pila through hunger use his teeth in vain, and Bonifazio<sup>3</sup>, who shepherded a large flock with his rook. Messer Marchese I saw, who of yore had leisure at Forlì for drinking with less thirst than here, and even thus was so great a sot that he never had his fill.

*Gentucca; the new style of poetry.*

But like as he doth, who after scanning a company gives one of its members the preference, so did I to him of Lucca, who seemed beyond the rest to crave information regarding me. He spake inarticulately, and I was ware of a sound like 'Gentucca' there<sup>4</sup> where he felt the wound of justice which macerates them so. 'Thou spirit,' said I, 'who

<sup>1</sup> A minor poet.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Martin IV, who had been Canon of Tours; he was said to have died from a surfeit of eels.

<sup>3</sup> Archbishop of Ravenna. The 'rook' here spoken of was a pastoral staff, shaped in its upper part like the castle or 'rook' at chess. A pastoral staff corresponding to this description, which has lately come to light, now exists at Ravenna.

<sup>4</sup> In his mouth, where he felt the craving for food.



seemest so eager to talk with me, speak so that I may understand thee, and satisfy by thy conversation at once thyself and me.' 'There lives a woman<sup>1</sup>,' he began, 'and as yet she wears not the veil<sup>2</sup>, who shall cause my city to be pleasing in thine eyes, however men may blame it<sup>3</sup>. With this anticipation go thy way; if by my lisping speech thou hast been misled, the facts will hereafter make the matter clear to thee. But say, do I see before me him who evoked the new style of verse, when he thus commenced: "Ladies, who have intelligence of Love"<sup>4</sup>?' And I to him: 'I am one who, when Love inspires me, lend an ear, and express in words what he dictates in the form of thought.' 'O brother, now I recognize,' said he, 'the impediment, which prevented the Notary, and Guittone<sup>5</sup> and me from adopting the sweet new style which I hear. I clearly perceive how that your pens follow closely the spirit that dictates, the which in sooth was not the case with ours. And whoso sets himself to regard the matter more closely, finds no distinction beyond this between the one and the other style'; and here as if satisfied he held his peace.

As the birds which winter on the banks of Nile, at times marshal themselves in the air, and anon wing their way more speedily and advance in file; so did all the folk that were there turn away their faces from us, and quicken their steps, agile as they were through their leanness and their

The doom  
of Corso  
Donati.

<sup>1</sup> Gentucca, a lady of Lucca, to whom Dante became attached.

<sup>2</sup> The head-dress of married women.

<sup>3</sup> The city of Lucca bore an evil name.

<sup>4</sup> This is the commencement of the first canzone in Dante's *Vita Nuova*.

<sup>5</sup> Guittone d' Arezzo; the Notary is Jacopo da Lentini. These poets and Bonagiunta were conventional, while the writers of the new school, to which Dante belonged, were natural.

zeal. And as the man who is weary with running lets his companions go their way, and walks until his heavy breathing is assuaged; so did Forese suffer the saintly flock to pass on, and followed behind with me, saying: 'When will the time come for me to see thee again?' 'How long I am to live I know not,' I replied; 'but my return will not occur so soon, that I shall not ere that in wish have reached the shore; seeing that the place where I was ordained to live is daily more and more depleted of virtue, and manifestly doomed to dismal ruin.' 'Now go thy way,' said he, 'for I behold him who is most guilty in this matter<sup>1</sup>, dragged at a horse's tail toward the abyss where expiation can never be made. At each step the beast tears faster onward, ever increasing its speed until it smites him, and leaves his corpse hideously mutilated. These spheres shall not long revolve'—and he looked aloft to heaven—'ere that which I can no further explain in words will become clear to thee. Now I must leave thee, for in this realm time is so precious, that by accompanying thee thus step by step I lose overmuch.'

Examples of  
gluttony.

As from a troop that is riding onward a horseman ever and anon dashes forth at a gallop, to win the honour of the first encounter, so did he depart from us with lengthened strides; and I pursued my way with those two alone, who on earth were so mighty leaders. And when he had advanced so far in front of us, that mine eyes went in pursuit of his person, even as my mind did of his words<sup>2</sup>, I perceived the verdant branches of another tree, laden with fruit, at no great distance

<sup>1</sup> Corso Donati, Forese's brother, leader of the Black Guelfs. He was killed by certain Catalans, after he had thrown himself from his horse, so that Dante's account of his death in this passage is, to say the least, dramatic.

<sup>2</sup> Both were on the strain.

from me, since I had but then turned in that direction. Beneath it I saw folk uplifting their hands, and uttering vague cries towards the leaves, like eager thoughtless children, who beg, while he of whom they beg gives no response, but, in order to stimulate their longing, holds on high the object of their desire and conceals it not. Anon they departed as it were undeceived; and we now reached the great tree, which rejects so many supplications and tears. 'Pass ye on, but draw not nigh hither; higher up<sup>1</sup> is the tree whereof Eve did eat, and from it this one is sprung': so spake a mysterious voice amid the branches; whereupon Virgil and Statius and I drew close together, and moved forward on the side which rises. 'Call to mind,' it said, 'the accursed ones<sup>2</sup>, the cloud-begotten, who, when drunk with wine, with their hybrid breasts encountered Theseus; those Hebrews<sup>3</sup> also, who drank without restraint, by reason whereof Gideon had none of them in his company, when he descended the hills to fight with Midian.' Thus we passed on, keeping close to one of the two edges, and listening to examples of the sin of gluttony, which were followed erewhile by a disastrous recompense. Anon, when we were at large on the solitary road, we proceeded full a thousand paces and more, each of us rapt in silent thought.

'On what are ye musing thus, as ye walk, ye three alone?' Thus on a sudden spake a voice; whereat I started, as doth a beast when smitten with panic fear. I raised my head to see who it was; and never in a furnace was glass or metal seen so bright or so ruddy, as one that I beheld, who said :

The Angel  
of the sixth  
Cornice.

<sup>1</sup> In the Earthly Paradise, on the summit of the Mountain of Purgatory.

<sup>2</sup> The Centaurs, who were born of Ixion and the Cloud, and were overcome by Theseus at the marriage feast of Hippodamia and Pirithous.

<sup>3</sup> Judges vii. 6, 8.

‘If it be your pleasure to mount upward, here ye must turn; on this hand is the way for such as seek for peace.’ His countenance had deprived me of sight; wherefore I turned me round, and went behind my Teachers, like one who in walking guides himself by sounds. And as the breeze of May, that heralds the dawn, rises and breathes fragrance, impregnate all with the scent of grass and flowers; so did I feel a wind strike me full on the forehead, accompanied by the waving of a wing, which imparted ambrosial perfume. And I heard the words: ‘Blessed are they whom so great grace enlightens, that the pleasure of taste excites not in their hearts excessive craving, seeing that they ever hunger in due measure.’

## CANTO XXV. THE SEVENTH CORNICE

How can  
a shade  
become  
emaciated?

The hour was so advanced that the ascent admitted not of delay, for the sun had left the meridian circle to the Bull, and midnight to the Scorpion<sup>1</sup>. Wherefore, like one who halts not, but goes his way, whatever object may present itself, if the pressure of need goad him on, so did we enter the passage, one before the other, mounting the stairway, the narrowness whereof forces those who ascend to walk singly. And as the fledgeling stork lifts its wing in its desire to fly, yet ventures not to quit the nest, and lets it fall again; so was the longing to ask a question kindled and quenched within me, until at last I assumed the look of one who essays to speak. For all the swiftness of our pace my beloved Father forbore not, but said: ‘Let fly the bow of speech, which thou hast drawn even to the arrowhead.’ Then with confidence I opened my lips, and thus began: ‘How can

<sup>1</sup> The time intended is about 2 p.m.



emaciation be produced, where the person is not affected by want of nutriment?' 'If thou wouldst call to mind how Meleager was wasted by the wasting of a brand<sup>1</sup>, he said, 'this point would not present so great difficulty to thee: and if thou wouldst reflect how, when ye move, your reflection in a mirror moves also, what now seems hard to thee would appear easy<sup>2</sup>; but, in order that thou mayst master the subject to thy heart's content, see here is Statius; to him I appeal, and of him I pray, that he would now be the healer of thy wounds.'

'If in thy presence I explain to him the eternal view,' Statius replied, 'my excuse must be that I cannot say thee nay.' Anon he thus commenced: 'If thy mind, my son, gives due heed to my words and takes them home, they will elucidate the question thou dost ask. Perfect blood<sup>3</sup>, which in no case is drawn from the thirsty veins, and which remains behind, like food that is removed from table, receives in the heart informing power for all the members of the human body, like the other blood which courses through the veins in order to be converted into those members. After being digested a second time it descends to the part whereof it is more seemly to keep silence than to speak, and thence it afterwards drops in the natural receptacle<sup>4</sup> upon another's blood: there the one blood and the other mingle—the one appointed to be passive, the other to be active owing to the perfect place<sup>5</sup> whence it proceeds. And being united with

Formation  
of the body  
and soul in  
man.

<sup>1</sup> Meleager's life was made to depend on the occult influence of a burning brand; similarly the spiritual body is wasted by the occult influence of the sight of food.

<sup>2</sup> The changes in the shade correspond to the changes of feeling in the soul.

<sup>3</sup> The *semen* is meant.

<sup>4</sup> The *matrix*.

<sup>5</sup> The heart.

it, it commences to operate, first by amalgamating with it, and anon it vivifies that to which it gave consistency, that it might serve as the material for it to work upon. The active power having become a soul<sup>1</sup>, like that of a plant—only differing from it in this, that the former is in progress, while the latter hath reached its goal<sup>2</sup>—thereafter<sup>3</sup> works so much that it now moves and feels, like a zoophyte; and, as the next stage, it takes in hand to provide with organs the faculties which spring from it. At this point, my son, is expanded, at this point is developed the power that proceeds from the heart of the begetter, in which Nature is intent on forming all the members: but how from being an animal it becomes a child<sup>4</sup>, thou seest not yet; this is so difficult a point, that erewhile it led astray one more wise than thou<sup>5</sup>, so that in his teaching he separated from the soul the “possible intellect<sup>6</sup>,” because he saw not any organ appropriated by it. Open thy heart to the truth which is coming, and know that, so soon as in the *fetus* the brain is perfectly organized, the Prime Mover, rejoicing in this display of skill on Nature’s part, turns Him toward it, and infuses a new spirit replete with power, which appropriates to its own essence the active element which it finds there, and forms a single soul, which lives and feels, and is conscious of its own existence. And that thou mayst find my saying less strange, bethink thee how

<sup>1</sup> This is the vegetative soul.

<sup>2</sup> The soul in the human embryo is in an elementary stage, while the life of the plant has reached its ultimate development.

<sup>3</sup> Here commences the formation of the sensitive soul.

<sup>4</sup> i. e. how it obtains the rational soul. This, Statius proceeds to say, is infused directly by God.

<sup>5</sup> Averroes.

<sup>6</sup> The higher intellectual power in man, as distinguished from the active intellect.

the sun's heat, passing into the juice which the grape distils, forms wine. The soul, when Lachesis hath no more thread, separates from the flesh, and carries with it potentially both its human and its divine element, whereof the former set of powers are one and all inoperative, while memory, intelligence and will are far more keen in their working than before. Without pause, by its own agency it descends in wondrous wise to one of the two shores<sup>1</sup>; there it first learns the way it is to take. No sooner is it circumscribed there by place, than the formative power radiates around, in the same manner and the same measure as it did in the limbs during life; and as the air, when it is charged with moisture, is bedecked with manifold colours through another's ray which is refracted in it, so here the neighbouring air takes the form, which by its innate power the soul that alighted there impresses on it: and thenceforward, as fire is followed by its flame whithersoever it moves, in like manner the spirit is accompanied by its new form. Because by this means it thereafter becomes visible, it is called a shade; hence too it provides organs for every sense, including even sight. Thus it is that we speak, thus we smile, thus we give vent to the tears and sighs which thou mayst have noticed along the Mountain. According as we are impressed by our desires and other emotions the shade shapes itself; and this is the cause of that which excites thy wonder.'

Formation  
of the shade  
after death.

We now had reached the last winding<sup>2</sup>, and had turned to the right, and another source of anxiety occupied our thoughts. Here the rock-wall shoots forth flames, and from the edge of the Cornice a blast of wind blows upward, which beats them back, and removes them to a distance from it. Hence we

Theseventh  
Cornice, of  
lust; spirits  
in the  
flames;  
examples of  
chastity.

<sup>1</sup> The shore of the Acheron, and the shore at the mouth of the Tiber.

<sup>2</sup> The last turning of the ascent which leads to the seventh Cornice.

were forced to pass along the unprotected side in single file, and I was afraid on the one hand of the fire, and on the other of falling over. 'In traversing this place,' my Leader said, 'there is good need to control well the eyes, seeing that a false step is easily made.' Then did I hear 'O God of clemency supreme' sung in the heart of that glowing heat, whereat I was not less anxious to turn me thitherward; and I beheld spirits walking in the flame: wherefore I kept both them and my footsteps in view, glancing this way and that from time to time. So soon as the conclusion of that hymn was reached, they cried aloud<sup>1</sup>, 'I know not a man'; then in low tones they recommenced the hymn. At its ending once more they cried: 'Diana stayed in the wood, and expelled Helice therefrom, in whom the poison of the goddess of love had worked.' Then they resumed their chant; and thereafter they proclaimed the names of wives and husbands who were chaste, as virtue and the marriage bond prescribe. And this alternation, I ween, suffices them throughout the time that they are burning in the fire; by such treatment and such diet must the wound at last be closed.

## CANTO XXVI. THE SEVENTH CORNICE

Dante's  
shadow cast  
on the fire.

While we were thus proceeding along the rim, one before the other, and the kind Master said repeatedly: 'Beware; profit by my warnings,' my right shoulder was smitten by the sun, whose rays were now turning from a blue to a white tint all the western sky; and I by my shadow caused the fire to assume a ruddier hue, to which token, slight though it was,

<sup>1</sup> The examples of chastity are the Blessed Virgin's reply to the Angel (Luke i. 34), and Diana's chaste indignation against Helice.



I saw many shades as they passed give heed. This was the cause which gave them occasion to speak of me, and they began to say one to another: 'This one looks not like an unreal body.' Anon certain of them advanced toward me, as far as was in their power, while giving constant heed not to exceed the limits of the burning. 'O thou, who, not from greater slackness, but maybe from reverence, dost walk behind the others, make answer to me, who am burning with thirst and fire; nor I alone am longing for thy reply, for all these desire it with keener thirst, than ever for cold water Indian or Ethiopian felt. Tell us how it is that thou dost exclude the sun, as if thou hadst not yet passed within the net of death.'

So spake one of them to me, and I should at once have revealed myself, had I not been absorbed in another strange sight which then appeared; for midway on the fiery road there came on facing these a folk, by gazing at whom my thoughts were engrossed. There saw I all the shades on either hand speed them, and exchange kisses each with each, without halting, contented with a brief enjoyment. Similarly the ants in their dark train salute one another mouth to mouth, haply to inquire their road and the prospects of their journey. So soon as they break off the friendly greeting, and ere they move a footstep thence, each one exerts himself to outcry the other; the newly arrived folk exclaim: 'Sodom<sup>1</sup> and Gomorrah'; the others: 'Pasiphaë entered within the cow, that the bull might have access to her wantonness.' Anon, like the cranes, part of whom fly toward the Rhipaeen mountains<sup>2</sup>, and part toward the desert sands, the latter shunning the frost, the former the sun, the one company

Spirits meeting and kissing. Examples of incontinence.

<sup>1</sup> Sodom and Pasiphaë are the examples of incontinence.

<sup>2</sup> An imaginary chain of mountains in northern Europe.

departs, the other comes on, and with tears they resume their previous chants and the exclamation which best suits their case; then the same spirits who had besought me drew nigh to me as before, wearing on their faces an expectant listening look.

The two  
companies  
of sinners.

For my part, having once and again perceived their desire, I thus began: 'Ye souls, who are assured at your appointed time of entering into peace, my limbs have not remained behind in yonder world either in youth or age, but together with their blood and their muscles accompany me here. To escape from blindness I am ascending by this way; a Dame<sup>1</sup> there is on high who wins grace for us, in the strength of which I pass through your realm wearing this mortal frame. But—so may your highest longing soon be satisfied, so that that Heaven which is replete with love and extends most amply<sup>2</sup> may entertain you—tell me, in order that hereafter I may record your answer; Who are ye? and who are that crowd which is departing in your rear?' Even as the mountaineer is perplexed with wonder, and gazes speechless, when rude and uncouth he enters the city, such was the look which all the shades assumed; but so soon as they were quit of their amazement, the which in noble hearts is soon allayed, the one who before had inquired of me began afresh: 'O happy thou, who with a view to a more blessed death dost lay up experience won from our domains! The folk who walk apart from us committed the sin, which erst caused Caesar in his triumph to hear himself reviled with the name of "Queen." For this cause, when they depart, they exclaim "Sodom"<sup>3</sup>, upbraiding themselves, as thou hast heard, and

<sup>1</sup> The Blessed Virgin.

<sup>2</sup> The highest, or Emphyrean Heaven.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. Gen. xix. 5.

promote by their shame the operation of the fire. Our sin was hermaphrodite<sup>1</sup>; but since we observed not the law ordained for man, being led like beasts by our desires, when we depart, to mark our ignominy we recite the name of her who made herself brutish within the wooden cow. Now thou knowest our lives, and the sin whereof we were guilty; if haply thou wouldst know who we are by name, the time is not fitting, nor could I recount them. Thy desire of knowing myself in sooth I will satisfy; I am Guido Guinicelli<sup>2</sup>, and I am already purging myself<sup>3</sup> because I fully repented ere I reached the term of life.'

As was the eagerness of the two sons to recognize their mother, what time Lycurgus was afflicted<sup>4</sup>, such were my feelings—though I was not so overcome by them—when I heard his own name uttered by him, who was a father to me, and to all the others my superiors, who ever composed sweet and graceful love-poetry: and without hearing or speaking I walked rapt in thought, for a long while gazing at him, though by reason of the fire I drew not nearer thither. So soon as I had my fill of looking, I announced myself devoted to his service, adding the assurance which inspires confidence<sup>5</sup>. And he to me: 'Thou leavest on my memory, by reason of the words I hear, an imprint so marked

Guido  
Guinicelli.

<sup>1</sup> Hermaphroditus was a type of unlimited indulgence in sensuality between the two sexes.

<sup>2</sup> He was the best of the Italian poets before Dante, and the originator of the 'sweet new style.'

<sup>3</sup> i. e. I have not been detained in Ante-Purgatory.

<sup>4</sup> When Opheltes, the son of Lycurgus, lost his life, Lycurgus attributed this to the negligence of Hypsipyle, and was about to put her to death, when her two sons, rushing impetuously in, recognized and saved her; Stat. *Theb.* v. 720-2.

<sup>5</sup> An oath.

and clear, that Lethe cannot obliterate or obscure it. But if that be true which thy words but now asseverated, tell me the reason why both in thy speech and thy looks thou givest evidence of affection for me.' And I to him: 'It is your<sup>1</sup> sweet lays, which, so long as the modern use endures, will cause the very ink wherewith they are written to continue precious.' 'My brother,' he said, 'this one<sup>2</sup> whom I indicate to thee with my finger,' and he pointed to a spirit in front of him, 'was a better craftsman of his mother tongue. Poets of love and writers of prose romances he surpassed them all, whatever the fools may say who give the bard of Limoges<sup>3</sup> the preference. It is a cry rather than the truth that they regard, and thus they fix their opinions before art or judgement gets a hearing from them. So in days of yore did many in Guittone's<sup>4</sup> case, passing on from mouth to mouth in loud tones his praise and his alone, until in most men's minds the truth hath mastered him. Now, seeing thou art so highly privileged that it is permitted thee to visit the cloister<sup>5</sup> where Christ is the head of the community, say to him a *Pater noster* on my behalf, so far as is needful for us in this world, where it is no longer in our power to sin<sup>6</sup>.' Then, haply to make room for others who chanced to be near him, he disappeared through the flames, like a fish in water when it sinks into the depths.

I advanced a space toward the person designated, and said that my desire of knowing him prepared me beforehand to

Arnaut  
Daniel.

<sup>1</sup> Here, as elsewhere, 'your' is used for 'thine' as a token of profound homage.

<sup>2</sup> The Provençal poet, Arnaut Daniel.

<sup>3</sup> Giraut de Borneuil.

<sup>4</sup> Guittone d' Arezzo.

<sup>5</sup> Paradise.

<sup>6</sup> i. e. omitting the last petition, 'Lead us not into temptation,' &c.



welcome his name. Thereupon without reserve he thus began<sup>1</sup>: 'So grateful to me is your courteous request, that I cannot and will not hide me from you. I am Arnaut, who shed tears, and chant as I go my way; my past folly I regretfully regard, and I joyfully look forward to the hoped-for bliss. Now I beseech you by that power which guides you to the summit of the stairs, in due season be mindful of my pain<sup>2</sup>.' Anon he hid himself in the fire which refines them.

## CANTO XXVII. THE SEVENTH CORNICE

As when the sun scatters its first rays at the place where its Creator shed His blood, while the Ebro lies beneath Libra on high, and the waves of the Ganges are heated by the noon-tide, such was its position now; so day was departing<sup>3</sup>, when the Angel of God with glad mien appeared to us. Without the flames he stood on the edge, and sang, in tones far clearer than the human voice: 'Blessed are the pure in heart.' Anon, when we drew nigh to him, he said: 'No further can ye go, ye saintly souls, without first feeling the grip of the fire: enter within it, and fail not to listen to the chanting beyond'; whereupon, as I heard him, I became like the malefactor who

*Dante passes through the fire.*

<sup>1</sup> The original of what follows is in the Provençal language.

<sup>2</sup> i. e. pray that my time in Purgatory may be shortened.

<sup>3</sup> According to Dante's geography the Mountain of Purgatory was the antipodes of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem was the centre of the habitable world, which extended over half the circumference of the globe from east to west, with the mouth of the Ganges and Spain as its extreme limits; consequently, when it was sunrise at Jerusalem, it would be midnight on the Ebro, midday on the Ganges, and (which is the point here) sunset in Purgatory.

is set in the pit <sup>1</sup>. I clasped my hands and bent forward over them, peering at the fire, and vividly picturing to myself human bodies which I had erewhile seen burning. My kind Conductors turned toward me, and Virgil said: 'My son, torment there may be here, but not death. Bethink thee, bethink thee . . . and if even on Geryon's back I guided thee in safety, how shall I not do so now, when so much nearer to God? Know this for sure that, wert thou to abide full a thousand years in the bosom of this flame, it would not denude thee of a single hair. And if haply thou thinkest that I am beguiling thee, advance towards it, and put it to the test thyself with thine own hands on the hem of thy garments. Cast off now, cast off all fear; turn thee this way, and come on with confidence.' Yet I remained immovable in defiance of my conscience. When he saw me stand thus stark and stubborn, with a touch of vexation he said: 'Mark you, my son; this barrier separates thee from Beatrice.' As Pyramus at the name of Thisbe opened his eyes when on the verge of death, and gazed at her, what time the mulberry assumed a ruddy hue <sup>2</sup>, so, all my obstinacy giving way, did I turn toward my wise Leader, at the sound of the name which evermore springs up in my mind. Thereupon with a shake of the head he said: 'Well? are we to stay this side?' and then he smiled, as at a child that is conquered by an apple. Anon he passed within the flame in front of me, requesting Statius, who ere that for a long distance had separated us, to come behind me.

<sup>1</sup> One form of punishment was to set the criminals head downwards in the earth.

<sup>2</sup> Pyramus under the impression that Thisbe had been killed slew himself. When Thisbe appeared, and assured her lover that she was his Thisbe, he looked up at her and then died. Thisbe then took her own life; and in answer to her dying prayer the colour of the fruit of the mulberry, which tree had been their trysting-place, was changed from white to dark.

So soon as I was within, gladly would I have flung myself into molten glass to cool me, so excessive there was the torrid heat. To cheer me my loving Father talked without pause of Beatrice as he went, saying: 'Methinks already I behold her eyes.' A voice<sup>1</sup> which chanted on the further side was our guide, and giving heed to it alone we issued forth where the ascent began. 'Come, ye blessed of my Father,' was heard within a light at that spot, so bright that it overpowered me, and I could not face it. 'The sun is departing,' it continued, 'and evening is at hand; halt not, but hasten your steps, ere the western sky be darkened.' The path rose straight within the rock, and its direction was such, that I broke in front of me the rays of the sun, which was already low<sup>2</sup>; and I and my sage companions had made essay of but few steps, when through the disappearance of my shadow we were ware that the sun was setting behind us. And ere the horizon throughout its vast expanse had assumed a uniform hue, and night had spread through all its wide domain, each of us reclined upon a separate stair; for the nature of the Mountain annulled within us, not the pleasure, but the power of ascending. As goats, which ere they ate their fill scoured the mountain-tops with daring speed, repose quietly in the shade, chewing the cud, while the sun is hot, guarded by the shepherd, who leans on his staff, and tends them as he leans: and as the herdsman, who abides in the fields, spends the night peacefully along with his cattle, on the watch that no wild beast may harry them: so was it then with us three; I was like the goat, they like the shepherds, the while we were hemmed in

The last  
stairway.

<sup>1</sup> This proceeded from an Angel, who guarded the approach to the Terrestrial Paradise.

<sup>2</sup> The path ascended eastwards, because the sun, which was in the west, cast Dante's shadow in front of him as he faced the Mountain.

by a high rock on either hand. But little of the outer world could there be seen; yet in that narrow space I beheld the stars, both brighter and larger than is their wont.

Dante's  
dream of  
Leah and  
Rachel.

While thus ruminating, and thus gazing at them, I was overcome by sleep; sleep, which oftentimes before an event hath the intimation thereof. At the hour, methinks, when from the eastern sky Venus, who appears ever enkindled by the fire of love, shed her first beams on the Mountain<sup>1</sup>, I seemed to see in a dream a lady young and fair, gathering flowers as she roved through a meadow; and these were the words she sang: 'Would any ask my name, let him know that I am Leah, and as I go I cull the blossoms with my fair hands to make me a garland. To give me pleasure before my mirror I here deck myself; but Rachel my sister withdraws not her eyes for a moment from hers, but sits before it all day long. Her joy consists in regarding her beauteous eyes, as mine doth in adorning me with my hands; she is satisfied by contemplation, I by working<sup>2</sup>.'

Virgil  
resigns his  
office of  
guide.

And now, by reason of the brightness that precedes the dawn, which rises more welcome to the returning pilgrim the nearer to his home he lodges, the shades of night were flying on every side, and along with them my sleep; whereupon I arose, seeing the great Masters already risen. 'That sweet fruit<sup>3</sup>, the quest of which along so many branches mortals anxiously pursue, will this day appease thy hunger': such were the words which Virgil addressed to me; and never was there guerdon, the charm whereof could compare

<sup>1</sup> The time intended is early morning; and this is mentioned because 'morning dreams are true.'

<sup>2</sup> The figures of Leah and Rachel here foreshadow those of Matelda and Beatrice in the Terrestrial Paradise.

<sup>3</sup> The knowledge of God.



with them. My desire of reaching the summit gained two-fold strength, so that thereafter at every step I felt the feathers grow to speed my flight. So soon as the whole stairway was scaled and lay beneath us, and we stood on the topmost step, Virgil fixed his eyes upon me, and said: 'The temporal fire and the eternal thou hast seen, my son, and thou hast reached a region, where of myself I can descry naught beyond. By the force of wit and skill I have conducted thee hither; henceforward let thine own pleasure be thy guide; from both the steep and the narrow ways<sup>1</sup> thou now art free. Behold yonder the sun which shines in thy face; behold the grass, the flowers and the shrubs, which the earth here spontaneously produces. Until the beauteous eyes, which tearfully summoned me to thine aid<sup>2</sup>, appear with joyful aspect, thou mayst sit or walk among them at thy will. No longer await either word or sign from me: free, sound and upright is thy will, and it would be amiss not to do its bidding; wherefore over thyself I invest thee with supreme control.'

## CANTO XXVIII. THE TERRESTRIAL PARADISE

Eager now to scan within and around the divine forest with its dense fresh foliage, which tempered to the eyes the early day, without further delay I quitted the bank, roaming through the meadow with lingering steps, where the ground

Dante enters the Terrestrial Paradise.

<sup>1</sup> The steep ways are the descents in Hell, the narrow the stairways in Purgatory.

<sup>2</sup> The eyes of Beatrice, when she summoned Virgil to rescue Dante from the wood of error; Inf. ii. 52 foll.

whereon I trod breathed fragrance on every side. A sweet breeze, unvarying in its movement, smote my brow as tenderly as a gentle gale; by reason whereof all the leaves, quivering responsively, swayed toward that quarter where the holy Mountain casts its first shadow<sup>1</sup>, yet were not so far deflected that the birds on their summits must needs cease from fulfilling their tasks; but with full delight they welcomed by their songs the breeze of morn within the leaves, which were chanting a refrain to their lays, like that which gathers from branch to branch in the pine-forest on the shore of Classe<sup>2</sup>, when Aeolus sets free the south-east wind.

The stream  
of Lethe.

Already had my dallying steps borne me so far within that ancient wood that I could not recognize the point at which I entered, when lo! my further progress was checked by a stream<sup>3</sup>, which by its ripples swayed leftward the grass which grew on its banks. The clearest waters that are found on earth would betray, one and all, an element of impurity when compared with that transparent rill, albeit it pursues its course in profound darkness beneath the perpetual shade, which never suffers sun or moon to shine there. I checked my steps, and let mine eyes pass on beyond the brook, to gaze at the wondrous variety of the fresh green branches; and there I beheld—as one doth suddenly behold an object, which through wonder banishes every other thought—a solitary Dame<sup>4</sup>, who, as she went, was singing, and making choice among the flowers wherewith all her path was bedecked.

<sup>1</sup> Towards the west.

<sup>2</sup> This pine-forest lies to the southward of Ravenna.

<sup>3</sup> Lethe, the river of forgetfulness.

<sup>4</sup> Matelda, who represents the active life, as Leah had done in Dante's dream. She is probably Matilda, the 'Great Countess' of Tuscany (1046-1115).

'Ah, Lady fair, who dost bask in the rays of love, if Matelda. I may trust thy looks, which are wont to bear witness for the heart, may it please thee to advance so far toward this stream,' said I to her, 'that I may hear what thou art singing. Thou dost recall to my mind the mien of Proserpine and her surroundings, what time her mother lost her, and she her wealth of flowers<sup>1</sup>.' As in dancing a lady turns, with her feet close to the ground and close to each other, scarcely advancing a single step the while; so on the crimson and the yellow blossoms did she turn toward me, like a maiden who casts down her chaste eyes; and she fulfilled my petition by drawing so nigh, that along with her sweet tones the meaning also reached me. So soon as she attained the point where the grass is laved by the fair stream's waves, she vouchsafed me the boon of lifting her eyes. Not so bright, I ween, was the light which shone beneath Venus' eyelids, when she was wounded by her son, who that once failed of his wonted aim<sup>2</sup>. From opposite on the right bank she smiled, still culling with her hands the gay flowers, which that high land produces without seed. By three paces did the river separate us; but the Hellespont, where Xerxes crossed it—he who even now is a curb to human pride<sup>3</sup>—was not more odious to Leander<sup>4</sup> by reason of its current between Sestos and Abydos, than was that stream to me, because it parted not then its waters.

'Ye are new-comers,' she began, 'and haply, because I She explains Dante's difficulties.

<sup>1</sup> Proserpine, the daughter of Ceres, was carried off by Pluto, when she was gathering flowers in the valley of Enna.

<sup>2</sup> Venus, being accidentally wounded by one of Cupid's arrows, became passionately enamoured of Adonis.

<sup>3</sup> Because of his ignominious retreat from Greece.

<sup>4</sup> Because it separated him from Hero.

smile in this chosen birthplace of the human race<sup>1</sup>, through surprise a question arises in your minds; but from the psalm *Delectasti*<sup>2</sup> light proceeds, which may disperse the cloud from off them. And thou who art in front, and didst proffer to me the request, say if thou wouldst fain hear aught further, since I have come prepared to answer to thy satisfaction every inquiry of thine.' 'The water,' I said, 'and the sound the forest makes, are at variance, methinks, with a statement to the opposite effect, which but now I heard and believed<sup>3</sup>.' And she replied: 'I will explain to thee the cause of that which excites thy wonder, and will remove the cloud of doubt which assails thee. The highest Good, who alone is well-pleasing to Himself, created man good and with a prospect of good, and assigned to him this place as a guarantee of eternal peace. Through his own transgression his sojourn here was brief; through his own transgression he exchanged chaste smiles and blithe enjoyment for lamentation and anguish. In order that the disturbances caused below through their natural force by exhalations from the water and the earth, which follow the heat upward so far as they can, might not in any wise disquiet man<sup>4</sup>, this Mountain rose so high toward heaven; and from the point where the gate is locked it is exempt from them. Now, seeing that the atmosphere revolves throughout in accordance with the first sphere of movement<sup>5</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> The Terrestrial Paradise is the Garden of Eden.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xcii. 4, 'Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands.' Her joy was in the forest and the flowers.

<sup>3</sup> Statius had said in *Purg.* xxi, that there was no change, atmospheric or otherwise, above the gate of entrance to Purgatory proper.

<sup>4</sup> i. e. while he was an occupant of the Garden of Eden.

<sup>5</sup> The *Primum Mobile*, or ninth Heaven, where the motion of the spheres is initiated. The atmosphere follows along with this, while the earth itself is stationary.



unless at some point its rotation be impeded, this summit, which is completely disengaged in the clear air, is smitten by that motion, which causes a rustling in the dense forest; and such prolific power have the trees when shaken, that with their potency they impregnate the breeze, which thereafter scatters it as it revolves round the globe: and the remainder of the earth, according as it is qualified in soil and climate, conceives and bears from divers germinal forces divers trees. Henceforth, when this is known, it need seem no marvel in yonder world, when a tree takes root there from no visible seed. Know, too, that the holy meadow where thou art teems with all manner of seeds, and produces such fruit as is not elsewhere gathered. The water which thou seest rises not from a source which is fed by moisture condensed by cold, like a river which increases and decreases in volume, but issues from a steady unvarying fountain, which through the agency of God's will is supplied afresh with the same quantity which it pours forth, as it opens in two directions. On this side it descends with an influence which frees men from the memory of sin; on yonder side it restores the memory of every good deed. On this it is called Lethe, and correspondingly on the other Eunoë<sup>1</sup>; nor doth it take effect, until both the one stream and the other have been tasted. Its flavour surpasses every other; and albeit, even if I reveal naught else to thee, thy thirst may be fully quenched, I will further as a free gift present thee with a corollary<sup>2</sup>; and my address, I ween, will not be less acceptable, if it widens its field beyond its promise to thee. Haply the poets who in days of yore sang of the golden age and its state of bliss dreamt on Parnassus of this spot. Here the progenitors of

<sup>1</sup> The stream of 'kindly thoughts.'

<sup>2</sup> A supplementary statement.

the human race were innocent; here evermore is spring with all manner of fruits; this source is the world-renowned nectar.' Thereupon, when I turned me round and faced my Poets, I perceived that they had heard the last sentence with a smile: anon mine eyes reverted to the beauteous Dame.

## CANTO XXIX. THE TERRESTRIAL PARADISE

The mystic  
procession.

Singing like a lady inspired by love, at the conclusion of her speech she added: 'Blessed are they whose sins are covered.' And like the nymphs, who were wont to roam the woodland shades alone, one desiring to behold, another to avoid, the sunshine, she then set forth against the stream, following along the bank, while I kept pace with her, making her tiny steps the measure of mine own. Less than fifty paces each had we advanced, when the two banks turned correspondingly, so that my course lay eastward. Nor had we in this wise yet progressed far, when the Lady faced full toward me, saying: 'My brother, look steadfastly and listen.' And lo! a sudden brilliancy shot through the great forest on every side, so that it made me wonder if it were lightning. But seeing that lightning ceases as instantaneously as it comes, and this light remained with ever-increasing splendour, I said to myself: 'What can this be?' Then did a sweet melody pervade the luminous air; whereupon I was impelled by righteous indignation to censure the audacity of Eve, who, where heaven and earth were obedient, being a woman, alone, and but just created, would not endure to abide under any veil'; beneath which had she been submissive, I should

<sup>1</sup> i. e. desired to acquire the knowledge of good and evil.

earlier and for a longer season have tasted those ineffable delights. While I was walking amid firstfruits so wondrous of the eternal pleasure, all entranced, and ever longing for more enjoyments, in front of us beneath the green boughs the air assumed the aspect of a burning fire, and the sweet tones were now perceived to be a song. Ye Virgins sacrosanct<sup>1</sup>, if ever for your sake I endured hunger, cold and vigils, good need have I to crave a recompense. Now must Helicon pour forth its streams for me, and Urania<sup>2</sup> with her choir lend me their aid to express in verse things hard to conceive in thought<sup>3</sup>.

A short space further on the semblance of seven trees of gold was counterfeited through the long interval which still interposed between us and them; but when I had drawn so nigh to them, that the 'common object'<sup>4</sup> which deceives the sense lost not through distance any of its features, the faculty which furnishes reason with the materials for argument<sup>5</sup> discovered that they were candlesticks<sup>6</sup>, and in the words of the chant distinguished Hosanna. In its upper part the fair equipment flamed far more brilliantly than the moon in midnight calm when her month is in mid-course. Full of wonderment I turned me to the kind Virgil, and he responded to me with a countenance not less oppressed by stupor. Then

The seven  
candle-  
sticks;  
the four-  
and-twenty  
elders.

<sup>1</sup> The Muses.

<sup>2</sup> The Muse of astronomy, and so of heavenly subjects.

<sup>3</sup> The mystic procession which now approaches represents the triumph of the Church as the supporter of Theology or Revealed Truth, of which here, as elsewhere in the poem, Beatrice is the embodiment.

<sup>4</sup> This is a technical expression, signifying a quality perceived by all the senses alike—in the present instance the qualities of size and shape.

<sup>5</sup> The faculty of apprehension.

<sup>6</sup> The seven candlesticks which lead the procession are emblematic of the seven spirits of God; cp. Rev. iv. 5.

did I once more regard the sublime objects, which were moving towards us at a pace so slow, that they would have been outstripped by a newly married bride. The Lady exclaimed to me: 'Wherefore art thou thus fired by the spectacle of the lustrous lights alone, and payest no heed to that which comes on in their rear?' Then saw I following close behind them, as under their guidance, folk robed in white; never on this earth was such whiteness seen. On its left side the water glistened, and when I looked upon it, it reflected back again, like a mirror, my left flank. When on the bank where I stood my position was such, that naught but the river separated me from them, to obtain a better view I stayed my steps; and I saw the flamelets move onward, leaving the air behind them tinted, like strokes of the painter's brush, so that there above it remained lined with seven bands<sup>1</sup>, all in those hues, whereof the sun forms his bow and Delia her girdle<sup>2</sup>. These standards stretched further to the rear than I could see; and, so far as I could judge, the outermost were ten paces apart. Beneath a fair sky such as I describe four-and-twenty elders<sup>3</sup>, two by two, came on with lilies crowned. They all were singing: 'Blessed among the daughters of Adam art thou<sup>4</sup>, and blessed for evermore may thy loveliness be.'

The four  
living  
creatures;  
the car; the

So soon as the flowers and the other verdant plants opposite me on the further bank ceased to be trodden by that chosen folk, as one star in heaven succeeds another star, there came

<sup>1</sup> These signify the seven gifts of the Spirit, viz. wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord; cp. Isa. xi. 2 (Vulgate).

<sup>2</sup> The girdle of Delia (i. e. the Moon) is the lunar halo.

<sup>3</sup> These represent the books of the Old Testament.

<sup>4</sup> Luke i. 42; these words are here addressed to Beatrice.



close after them four living creatures <sup>1</sup>, crowned all of them with green leaves. Each one was feathered with six wings; the feathers were full of eyes, and the eyes of Argus, when they were alert, would have resembled them. To describe their forms I can expend no more verses, Reader; for other outlay is so pressing in its demands, that to this I cannot be bountiful. But read Ezekiel <sup>2</sup>, who depicts them as he saw them come from the cold clime with wind and cloud and fire; and as thou wilt find them in his pages, such were they there, save that as regards their wings John differs from him and sides with me <sup>3</sup>. The space within the four living creatures contained a triumphal chariot supported on two wheels, which was drawn by the neck of a Gryphon <sup>4</sup>. Between the midmost band and the three on either side he uplifted his two wings, so that they passed through, and injured none of them. So high they rose that they were lost to sight; his limbs were golden, so far as he was a bird, and the others were partly white and partly red. With so magnificent a car Rome gladdened not the heart of Africanus or Augustus; nay, the chariot of the sun would be mean in comparison thereof—the chariot of the sun, which swerved from its course, and was consumed by fire through the intercession of the prayerful Earth, when Jupiter in his secret counsels was just <sup>5</sup>. By the

Gryphon;  
the dancing  
ladies.

<sup>1</sup> The emblems of the Evangelists, here used to signify the Four Gospels.

<sup>2</sup> Ezek. i. 4-6.

<sup>3</sup> Ezekiel gives the living creatures four wings, St. John (Rev. iv. 8) and Dante six.

<sup>4</sup> The chariot is the Church, which is drawn by our Lord, whose two natures correspond to the two elements of the lion and the eagle in the Gryphon.

<sup>5</sup> When Phaëthon drove the chariot of the sun amiss, the earth was saved from conflagration by Jupiter, who destroyed the chariot by lightning.

right wheel came on three Ladies<sup>1</sup> dancing in a ring: one so red, that she would hardly have been distinguished in the fire; while the next appeared as if her flesh and bones were made of emerald, and the third resembled newly fallen snow. And they seemed to be led now by the white Dame, now by the red; and by the latter's singing the other two regulated the speed or slowness of their steps. By the left wheel four<sup>2</sup>, robed in purple, were making holiday, following the movements of one of their number, who had three eyes in her head<sup>3</sup>.

The seven  
elders.

Behind all the group here treated of<sup>4</sup> I saw two aged men, unlike in dress, but like in their bearing, which was dignified and composed. The one showed himself to be a disciple of that supreme Hippocrates<sup>5</sup>, whom nature made for her favourite creature's<sup>6</sup> benefit. The other<sup>7</sup> gave evidence of the opposite vocation by a sword so sharp and bright, that even on the hither side of the stream it inspired me with fear. Anon I beheld four in humble guise, and walking last of all a solitary elder, who though asleep had keenness in his looks. And these seven, like the company in front, were dressed in white, but the garland round their heads, instead of lilies, was

<sup>1</sup> The three theological virtues of Love, Hope and Faith.

<sup>2</sup> The four cardinal virtues of Justice, Prudence, Fortitude and Temperance.

<sup>3</sup> Prudence, who views the past, the present, and the future.

<sup>4</sup> The figures which conclude the procession represent the remaining books of the New Testament—St. Luke, the Acts of the Apostles; St. Paul, St. James, St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude their Epistles; and St. John again the Apocalypse.

<sup>5</sup> The great physician of antiquity. St. Luke, 'the beloved physician,' is here spoken of as his follower.

<sup>6</sup> Man.

<sup>7</sup> St. Paul, who smites with the sword of the spirit.

composed of roses and other crimson flowers<sup>1</sup>; looking from a little distance one would have sworn that from their brows upward they were all afire. And when the car was opposite me, a thunder-clap was heard; and that dignified folk seemed to be denied further progress, since along with the standards in front they halted there.

### CANTO XXX. THE TERRESTRIAL PARADISE

When the Septentrion of the highest heaven<sup>2</sup>—which  
never knew rising or setting, nor was obscured by other cloud  
than sin, and which in that spot was intimating to each his  
rightful movement, as doth the lower constellation of seven  
stars<sup>3</sup> to him who turns the rudder to come to port—halted  
in station, the truthful folk<sup>4</sup>, who ere that had walked  
between it and the Gryphon, turned toward the chariot, as to  
their repose: and one of their number<sup>5</sup>, like a messenger  
from heaven, exclaimed three times with tuneful notes:  
'Come from Lebanon, my bride<sup>6</sup>'; and this all the rest  
repeated. As at the final summons the blessed will rise with

Beatrice  
descends on  
the chariot.

<sup>1</sup> Allegorically—as the writings of the Old Testament are characterized by purity of faith, so are those of the New Testament by the warmth of Christian love.

<sup>2</sup> The Septentrion or constellation of seven stars of the highest heaven signifies the seven Spirits of God, and so in the present connexion the seven candlesticks which represent them in the mystic procession.

<sup>3</sup> The Bear.

<sup>4</sup> The four-and-twenty elders.

<sup>5</sup> The one who represented the book of Canticles.

<sup>6</sup> Cant. iv. 8.

speed each from his sepulchral chamber, while the voice of their renewed humanity raises Alleluia; so over the heavenly car at the sound of that elder's voice did a hundred ministers and messengers of eternal life arise. 'Blessed art thou who comest<sup>1</sup>,' they all were saying; and 'Offer lilies in handfuls<sup>2</sup>,' the while they scattered flowers above and around. I have seen erewhile at early morn all the eastern sky of a roseate hue, and the rest of heaven arrayed in tranquil beauty, and the sun's face rising dimly, so that through the tempering influence of the mist the eye could long endure it: in such wise, within a cloud of flowers which uprose from the angels' hands, and descended again both within and without, there appeared to me a Lady crowned with olive over a white veil, and wearing beneath a green mantle a robe of the colour of living flame. And my spirit, for which so long time had passed since it was overpowered with trembling awe at her presence, albeit mine eyes revealed naught further to me, through an occult influence proceeding from her was conscious of the great might of its early love.

Virgil  
disappears.

So soon as the sublime power, which even before I emerged from boyhood<sup>3</sup> had pierced me through and through, smote me on the face, I turned me leftward with that confidence wherewith a young child hastes to its mother when assailed by fear or grief, to say to Virgil: 'To the last drop my blood is quivering; I recognize the tokens of my ancient flame.' But Virgil had left us bereaved of his presence, Virgil my most tender father, Virgil, to whom for my salvation I surrendered myself; nor did all the joys which our

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Matt. xxi. 9. This is now addressed to Beatrice.

<sup>2</sup> Virg. *Aen.* vi. 884.

<sup>3</sup> Dante was nine years old when he first saw Beatrice; *Vita Nuova*, § 2, ll. 14, 15.



first mother lost<sup>1</sup> avail to prevent my cheeks, which had been cleansed with dew<sup>2</sup>, from being once more stained with tears.

‘Dante, for all that Virgil hath departed, lament not yet, not yet, for thou must lament by reason of another weapon.’  
 As an admiral surveys, now from the prow, now from the stern, the folk who ply their tasks in the other vessels, and stimulates their diligence; so on the left side of the chariot, when I turned me at the sound of my name, which perforce is mentioned here, I saw the Dame, who first appeared to me veiled beneath the angels’ pageantry<sup>3</sup>, direct her eyes toward me on the hither side of the stream. Albeit the veil which descended from her head, garlanded with the leaves which Minerva loves<sup>4</sup>, suffered her not to be clearly seen, in queenly wise, still haughty in her demeanour, she proceeded, like one who, while he speaks, keeps in reserve his severest utterances: ‘Regard me well; I am, aye I am Beatrice: how durst thou approach the Mountain? Knewest thou not that here man is happy?’ Mine eyes as they fell rested on the pellucid stream; but when I saw myself therein I withdrew them to the grassy bank, so great was the shame which oppressed my brows. As commanding as a mother appears to her son, did she appear to me; from which cause the flavour of severe compassion hath a taste of bitterness. She held her peace, and on a sudden the angels sang: ‘In thee, O Lord, have I put my trust<sup>5</sup>’; but beyond ‘thou hast set my feet in a large room’ they did not proceed. As amid the living rafters<sup>6</sup> on the ridge of Italy the snow is congealed by the

Beatrice reproaches Dante for having deserted her.

<sup>1</sup> The delights of the Terrestrial Paradise.

<sup>2</sup> By Virgil at the foot of the Mountain of Purgatory; Purg. i. 124-9.

<sup>3</sup> The cloud of flowers.

<sup>4</sup> Olive leaves.

<sup>5</sup> Ps. xxxi. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Trees.



freezing breath of the Slavonian winds<sup>1</sup>, and anon melts and filters into itself, if haply a breeze comes from the land where shadows are lost<sup>2</sup>, even as wax is melted at the fire: so was I devoid of tears and sighs ere they began to sing, who ever make melody, following the music of the eternal spheres; but so soon as through their sweet harmonies I perceived their compassion for me, more clearly than if they had said: 'Wherefore, Lady, dost thou unman him so?' the chill which had gathered round my heart dissolved in breath and water, and issued painfully from my breast through the mouth and eyes.

The story  
of his fall.

She, still standing motionless on the same side of the chariot, thereafter addressed in turn the compassionate beings in the following words: 'Ye keep watch in the eternal day, so that from you neither night nor sleep conceals one step which the ages make in their course; wherefore my reply is the rather made in order that he who is weeping yonder may hear me, so that his suffering may be proportionate to his sin. Not only through the working of the mighty spheres, which dispose each seed toward a certain end according to the star that doth accompany it<sup>3</sup>; but through the abundance of divine graces, which are showered down from clouds so elevated that our sight cannot approach thereto, this one was such potentially in his early life, that every right disposition would have produced wondrous results in him. But by harmful plants and want of cultivation land becomes more noxious and more wild in proportion to its native fertility.

<sup>1</sup> North-east winds from the Dalmatian mountains.

<sup>2</sup> From the tropics, where the sun at certain times of the year is vertical and casts no shadow.

<sup>3</sup> The planetary influences on human character are meant; there are explained in *Par. ii.*

Awhile I sustained him by my countenance; by displaying to him my youthful eyes I led him with me in the right direction. So soon as I was on the threshold of my second age<sup>1</sup> and passed to a better world, this one deserted me and devoted himself to another<sup>2</sup>. When from the mortal I had risen to the immortal life, and beauty and virtue had accrued to me, I was less dear to him and less pleasing; and he went astray on the way of error, pursuing delusive images of good, such as fulfil no promises. Nor did it avail me to obtain for him by prayer communications from Heaven, whereby both in dreams and otherwise I recalled him; so little cared he for them. So low he fell, that all expedients were now inadequate to rescue him, save that of showing him the lost folk. With a view to this I visited the gate of the dead, and tearfully uttered my prayers to him who hath conducted him upward to this spot. A sublime appointment of God would be violated, were he to cross Lethe, and taste the food which is in prospect, scot-free of such repentance as causes tears to flow.'

## CANTO XXXI. THE TERRESTRIAL PARADISE

'O thou, who art on yonder side of the sacred stream'—Dante confesses his sin.  
thus she began afresh, continuing without delay, and turning

<sup>1</sup> The second period of life according to Dante commenced at twenty-five years of age, and Beatrice was in her twenty-fifth year when she died.

<sup>2</sup> Who the lady was who is here intended is not certain; allegorically interpreted, she signifies philosophy (cp. *Conv.* iii. ll. 2-4), and it is implied that Dante for a time allowed himself to be absorbed in that study to the neglect of theology; but in what follows Beatrice means to say further, that he became engrossed in worldly interests and pleasures, to free himself from which conversion was necessary.

toward me the point of her speech, which when it only smote edgewise seemed to me severe—‘say, say whether this is true; a charge so grievous must needs be followed by thy confession.’ My faculties were so perplexed, that my voice, though it arose, expired again, ere it escaped from the organs of speech. After a pause she said: ‘Of what art thou thinking? Answer me: for the water<sup>1</sup> hath not yet impaired within thee those sad memories.’ Confusion and fear combined caused an ‘aye’ so feeble to issue from my lips that the eyes were needed to perceive it. As a crossbow, when it goes off from being too tightly drawn, doth break its string and bow, and the shaft hits the mark with less force, so beneath that heavy burden did I break down, giving vent to tears and sighs, and my voice flagged in its passage. Whereupon she said to me: ‘In the midst of the passion that I inspired, which was leading thee to love that Good beyond which there is no object of aspiration, what dikes across thy path or what chains didst thou find, to force thee thus to deprive thyself of the hope of a further advance? And what attractions or what profit appeared in the aspect of the other forms of good, that thou must needs pay court to them?’ After heaving a bitter sigh, hardly could I find the voice to answer, and my lips with difficulty gave it form. With tears I said: ‘The present world with its deceptive pleasure turned my steps astray, so soon as thy countenance was hidden from me.’ And she: ‘Hadst thou kept silence, or denied what thou dost confess, thy sin would not be less manifest, so dread a Judge is cognizant thereof. But when from a man’s own mouth the charge of sin proceeds, in our assize the whetstone turns against the weapon’s edge. Nevertheless, in order that thou mayst now feel shame at thy transgression, and in future at

<sup>1</sup> Lethe.



the voice of the Sirens mayst be more resolute, cease from sowing tears, and listen; so shalt thou hear how in the opposite direction my buried form should have impelled thee. Never did nature or art exhibit to thee aught so charming as the fair limbs wherein I was enclosed, and which are resolved into earth: and if by my death the choicest pleasure was thus lost to thee, how should aught else on earth thenceforward induce thee to desire it? Assuredly at the first assault of delusive things thou shouldst have soared aloft, following me who was no longer of that nature. No mere girl, or other vain object of so brief enjoyment, should have depressed thy wings, and forced thee to await renewed attacks. Two or three such a young bird doth await, but in the sight of full-fledged birds in vain is the net spread or arrow aimed.' As children stand mute with shame, their eyes fixed on the ground, the while they listen, and realize their fault and feel repentant, so was it with me; whereupon she said: 'Since what thou hearest makes thee sad, uplift thy beard, and thou wilt be more distressed by what thou seest.' Less resistance doth a stout oak offer, when uprooted either by the north wind, or by that which blows from Iarbas' land<sup>1</sup>, than did I, when bidden by her to raise my chin; and when she designated my face by the beard, I clearly recognized the sting which that implied<sup>2</sup>.

So soon as I lifted my head, I was ware that those first-created beings had ceased to scatter flowers; and mine eyes, which still had scant confidence, perceived that Beatrice had turned toward the animal<sup>3</sup>, which is one only person in two

He is  
immersed  
in Lethe.

<sup>1</sup> The south or south-west wind, which was called by the Romans *Africus*. Iarbas was king of the Gaetulians in Africa; Virg. *Aen.* iv. 196 foll.

<sup>2</sup> It reminded him that he was a grown man.

<sup>3</sup> The Gryphon, who represents our Lord.

natures. Beneath her veil, and on the further side of the stream, she seemed to me to surpass—to surpass, I say, her former self, more than in this world she excelled all other women. So keenly there did the sting of repentance wound me, that such things as withdrew me most from her by the love they inspired, became above all others repulsive to me. Self-conviction so deep assailed my heart, that I sank overpowered; and what was then my condition, she only knows who was the cause thereof. Anon, when my heart reinvigorated my senses, I beheld above me the Lady whom I had found in solitude<sup>1</sup>, and she was saying: ‘Hold fast, hold fast by me.’ Up to the neck she had immersed me in the river, and she was traversing the surface of the water, light as a shuttle, drawing me behind her. As I neared the blessed bank, I heard ‘Thou shalt purge me<sup>2</sup>’ sung in such dulcet tones, that, far from describing it, I cannot recall it. The fair Lady opened her arms, and clasping my head plunged me so deep that I must needs imbibe the water; anon she drew me forth, and after my immersion presented me in the midst of the four beauteous Dames who were dancing, and each one of them outstretched her arm above me.

He sees  
Beatrice  
unveiled.

‘Here we are nymphs, and in the heaven we are stars; ere Beatrice descended to the world we were ordained to be her handmaidens. We will lead thee to her eyes; but the three Dames yonder will furnish thee with a clear vision of the glad light which shines in them, for their insight is more profound.’ Thus they commenced with song; and then they conducted me in their company to the Gryphon’s breast, where Beatrice stood facing us. ‘Be not chary of thy looks,’ they said; ‘we have set thee in the presence of those emeralds, whence Love erewhile aimed his shafts at

<sup>1</sup> Matelda.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. li. 7.

thee.' A thousand longings of more than fiery heat attracted mine eyes to those radiant eyes, which were steadfastly fixed on the Gryphon alone. In them, like the sun in a mirror, the animal of two natures beamed, now with the one, now with the other function<sup>1</sup>. Bethink thee, Reader, whether I marvelled, when I saw the thing, though in itself unchanged, take more than one form as seen in its image<sup>2</sup>. While my soul, in fullness of rapture and delight, was tasting that food, for which he that hath his fill thereof still thirsts, the other three Dames, evincing by their bearing their higher rank, came forward, dancing to their angelic song. 'Twas thus they sang: 'Turn, Beatrice, turn thy saintly eyes toward thy votary, who for the sight of thee hath journeyed so far. Of thy grace do us the favour to reveal to him thy mouth, that he may discern the second charm<sup>3</sup> which thou dost conceal.' O radiance of eternal living light, who ever grew so pale<sup>4</sup> beneath Parnassus' shade, or drank so deeply from its fountain, that he would not feel his mind oppressed, when he essayed to represent the semblance thou didst wear in that spot where the Heaven with its harmonies shows thy perfect image<sup>5</sup>, when thou didst unveil thyself in the open air?

<sup>1</sup> i. e. Christ was revealed in theological truth at one time as God, at another as man.

<sup>2</sup> i. e. reflected in the eyes of Beatrice.

<sup>3</sup> Beatrice's smile, which represents persuasion, as her eyes represent demonstration.

<sup>4</sup> With study.

<sup>5</sup> The word which is found in the original here (*adombrare*, 'to shade') seems to be used in the pictorial sense of 'to give the finishing shades or touches to'; cp. Ariosto, *Orl. Fur.* I. lviii. 7, 8, 'Non starò per ripulsa o finto sdegno, Ch' io non adombri e incarni il mio disegno.' I am indebted for this explanation of a much debated passage to my friend Dr. Shadwell.

## CANTO XXXII. THE TERRESTRIAL PARADISE

The  
procession  
retires.

Mine eyes were so absorbed, and so eager to quench their ten years' thirst<sup>1</sup>, that every other sense was in abeyance within me; and they were restrained by a wall of indifference on either hand, so powerfully with its old attraction did the saintly smile ensnare them; when my looks were perforce turned leftward by those divinities<sup>2</sup>, since I heard one of their number say, 'Too keen thy gaze.' That condition of the sight which is found in eyes just smitten by the sun blinded me for a while; but so soon as my visual power adapted itself once more to the inferior splendour<sup>3</sup>—inferior, I mean, compared with that superior object, from which I was forced to avert mine eyes—I saw that the glorious army had wheeled to the right, and were retracing their steps with the sun and the seven flames in front of them. As a squadron, which turns to retreat under cover of its shields, first wheels round with its standard ere the whole force can change its station, so did all those soldiers of the celestial kingdom who were in front pass us, ere the pole of the car was turned. Anon the Ladies returned to the wheels, and the Gryphon moved the blessed burden onward, yet so that not one of his feathers was thereby shaken<sup>4</sup>. The fair Dame who drew me through the ford, with Statius and myself, followed the wheel which described the smaller arc in turning. As we went our way

<sup>1</sup> As Beatrice died in 1290, ten years had elapsed since that time at the date of Dante's Vision in 1300.

<sup>2</sup> The three theological virtues.

<sup>3</sup> The car and its accompanying pageant.

<sup>4</sup> Christ, though He moves the Church, is Himself immutable.



through the lofty forest, which was uninhabited by reason of her sin who trusted the serpent, our steps were regulated by an angelic strain.

Maybe an arrow shot from a bow would measure in three flights the space that we had advanced when Beatrice descended<sup>1</sup>. I heard them, one and all, murmur 'Adam!'<sup>2</sup> anon they encircled a tree, whose every bough was stripped of flowers and leaves. Its branches, which expand in proportion as they rise, would be from their height an object of wonder to the Indians in their woods. 'Blessed art thou, O Gryphon, who pluckest not with thy beak aught of this tree, which is sweet to the taste, because the belly is made bitter thereby<sup>3</sup>.' Thus around that mighty tree did the others exclaim; and the animal of two natures said: 'In this wise is preserved the seed of all righteousness.' Then turning round toward the pole which he had drawn, he dragged it to the foot of the leafless tree, and left bound to it that which proceeded therefrom<sup>4</sup>. Even as our trees,

The car is attached to a tree.

<sup>1</sup> With the descent of Beatrice from the car a change takes place in that which is represented; hitherto it has been the glorification of Theology in the person of Beatrice, now the main subject is the fortunes of the Church (the car).

<sup>2</sup> This denouncement of Adam's transgression is made as they approach the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil. This tree, however, in what follows is regarded allegorically from another point of view, viz. as representing the Empire.

<sup>3</sup> This is a protest against the appropriation by the Church of the temporal advantages of the Empire. Christ renounced all temporal power, and those of his followers who attempt to seize it suffer for doing so.

<sup>4</sup> The pole of the car with its cross-piece represents the Cross, and this according to the mediaeval legend was made of wood which was derived from the Tree of Knowledge. 'It is now attached to this tree in order to signify the connexion which exists between the Church and the Empire, though the two act independently.

what time the light of the great luminary descends to earth in combination with that which beams in the wake of the heavenly Roach<sup>1</sup>, put forth their buds, and anon are renewed each with its proper colour ere beneath another constellation the sun yokes his steeds; so did the tree, whose boughs were erewhile so bare, renovate itself, disclosing a hue intermediate between rose and violet. The hymn which that folk then chanted I understood not, nor in this world is it sung, nor could I to the end bear to listen to the tune.

Beatrice  
remains,  
with the  
Ladies and  
the seven  
candle-  
sticks.

Were it in my power to describe how the merciless eyes sank asleep at the story of Syrinx<sup>2</sup>—those eyes, whose too great watchfulness cost them so dear—like a painter copying from an original picture, I would relate how slumber overcame me; but let him that would describe the process see that he do it well. Wherefore I pass on to the time of my awaking, and say that the veil of sleep was rent for me by a lustre, and by the cry: ‘Arise, what ails thee?’ As Peter, James and John<sup>3</sup>, when they had been led to see a few flowers of the apple-tree, which causes the angels to hunger for its fruit, and makes in heaven a perpetual marriage feast, and were overpowered at the sight, recovered themselves on hearing the word whereby slumbers more profound were broken, and perceived that their company was diminished by both Moses and Elias, and that their Master’s robe had changed; so did I recover, and I beheld standing over me that compassionate Dame, who ere this had guided my steps along the stream;

<sup>1</sup> In the early spring, when the sun is in Aries, the sign of the zodiac which follows Pisces.

<sup>2</sup> The watchful Argus was lulled to sleep by Mercury, who related to him the story of the nymph Syrinx, and was afterwards slain by him.

<sup>3</sup> Dante’s loss and recovery of consciousness is compared to that of the three Apostles at the time of the Transfiguration.

and all in doubt I said: 'Where is Beatrice?' And she replied: 'Behold her seated on the root of the tree beneath its freshly grown leafage. Behold the retinue which surrounds her; the others are ascending on high in the wake of the Gryphon with songs more sweet and of sublimer import.' Whether her speech were prolonged further I know not, for that Dame was now before mine eyes, who had excluded from my mind all other thoughts. Alone on the bare ground she was seated, being left there in guardianship of the car, which I saw attached by the animal of two natures. Around her the seven nymphs<sup>1</sup> formed a defence, bearing in their hands those lights, which neither the North wind nor the South disturbs. 'Here for a short space thou shalt be a forest-dweller; and in my company thou shalt be everlastingly a citizen of that Rome where Christ is a Roman; wherefore, for the benefit of the depraved world, fasten now thine eyes on the car, and that which thou beholdest, see thou record when thou hast returned thither.' So spake Beatrice; and I, who was the willing slave of her injunctions, turned my thoughts and mine eyes where she desired.

Never did lightning, when it darts from the remotest region of the air, descend from a dense cloud so swiftly, as I saw the bird of Jove rush downward along the tree, tearing off its bark, and the flowers and fresh leaves withal<sup>2</sup>; and with its full force it smote the car, whereat it staggered, as doth a ship in a storm, now to starboard, now to larboard, when mastered by the waves. Anon I saw how into the body of

The crises in  
the history  
of the  
Church.

<sup>1</sup> The four cardinal and the three theological Virtues. They, together with the graces of the Spirit (the seven candlesticks) and the true Faith (Beatrice), are henceforth the guardians of the Church.

<sup>2</sup> This signifies the persecution of the Church by the heathen emperors.

the triumphal chariot there crept a fox <sup>1</sup>, which seemed to be starving from all wholesome food : but my Lady, upbraiding it for its foul sins, turned it in flight as swiftly as its fleshless bones could bear. Thereafter I saw the eagle descend from the same quarter whence erewhile it came on the interior of the car, and leave it covered with its plumage <sup>2</sup>. Then proceeded from heaven a voice, such as issues from a heart distraught with woe, and thus it spake: 'O my beloved bark, how ill thou art freighted !' Anon methought between the two wheels the earth opened, and from it I saw come forth a dragon <sup>3</sup>, which drove its tail upward through the car ; and drawing in that noxious weapon, as a wasp withdraws its sting, it bore away a portion of the floor, and departed in devious course. What remained of the car covered itself anew with feathers <sup>4</sup>—a gift, maybe, which a sound and generous motive prompted—as fertile earth doth clothe itself with grass ; and in less time than it takes for a sigh to pass the lips both one and the other wheel and the pole were overspread therewith. Through the change thus wrought the sacred fabric put forth heads on its several parts, three upon the pole, and one at each angle. The former were horned like oxen, but the four on their foreheads had a single horn ; never before was so weird an object seen. Seated upon it <sup>5</sup>, firm as a fortress on a mountain height, I beheld an abandoned harlot with eyes quick to glance around. And as if to prevent

<sup>1</sup> The early heresies, especially Arianism.

<sup>2</sup> The (fictitious) Donation of the States of the Church by the emperor Constantine, which introduced corruption.

<sup>3</sup> Mahometanism.

<sup>4</sup> Gifts of land bestowed on the Church by Pepin and Charlemagne.

<sup>5</sup> What follows represents the relations of the Papacy and the French Monarchy, especially in the time of Boniface VIII.



her from being taken from him, I saw upright beside her a giant, and they kissed each other again and again; but because she turned toward me her roving lustful eyes, from head to foot that furious suitor lashed her. Anon, full of suspicion and embittered by rage, he detached the portentous vehicle<sup>1</sup>, and dragged it so far through the wood, that between me and the harlot with her transformed monster he made a screen of that alone.

## CANTO XXXIII. THE TERRESTRIAL PARADISE

‘O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance’; Beatrice encourages Dante. thus in alternate verses did the Ladies, now three, now four, commence with tears their sweet psalmody; and with sighs of compassion Beatrice listened to them, so wan in aspect, that hardly did Mary change countenance more beside the cross. But when the other virgins made way for her to speak, rising erect to her feet, and fiery red in hue, she replied: ‘A little while, and ye shall not see me, and again a little while, my beloved sisters, and ye shall see me.’ Anon she stationed them all seven in front of her, and by a gesture she bade me and the Dame, and the Sage who remained<sup>2</sup>, to follow her. In this wise she started, and she had not, methinks, advanced ten paces over the ground when her eyes fell on mine, and with a serene look she said: ‘Quicken thy steps, so that, if I address thee, thou mayst be in a favourable position to hear me.’

<sup>1</sup> This means the removal of the Papal See to Avignon.

<sup>2</sup> Statius, who remained when Virgil departed.

The im-  
pending  
ruin of the  
enemies of  
the Church.

So soon as I was by her side, as was my duty, she said to me: 'Wherefore, brother, dost thou not venture now, while walking in my company, to question me?' As happens to men who are overcome by bashfulness when speaking in the presence of their superiors, so that their voice is inaudible when it reaches the lips, so was it with me, when in broken accents I commenced: 'My Lady, you know my need, and what avails to help it.' And she to me: 'From fear and shame I will that henceforth thou shouldst free thee, that thou mayst no longer speak like one in a dream. Know that the vessel which the serpent broke, was and is not <sup>1</sup>; but let him who is responsible for this <sup>2</sup> bethink him that God's vengeance fears not any sop <sup>3</sup>. The eagle <sup>4</sup> which left its feathers on the car, whereby it became a prodigy and afterwards a prey, will not be forever without an heir; for in sooth I see (and therefore I relate it) stars even now drawing nigh, secure against all opposition and restraint, to assign us the time at which a 'five hundred ten and five <sup>5</sup>,' sent by God, shall slay the fraudulent dame along with the giant who is her partner in sin. Maybe my dark utterance, like that of Themis and the

<sup>1</sup> i.e. in the eyes of God the Papacy, which represents the Church, ceased to exist when its seat was transferred to Avignon.

<sup>2</sup> Philip the Fair, who was the chief agent in bringing about this change.

<sup>3</sup> i.e. cannot be impeded. The reference is to a limitation which existed to the practice of the *vendetta* in Italy, to the effect that if the murderer could eat a sop of bread and wine at the grave of his victim within nine days from the time of death, he was free from the vengeance of the family.

<sup>4</sup> The Imperial line.

<sup>5</sup> This number, which in Roman letters is *pxv*, is generally regarded as equivalent to the Latin *pux* by transposition of the last two letters. The person who is thus darkly intimated is probably a hoped-for regenerator of Italy.

Sphinx, persuades thee less, because after their manner it obscures the intellect; but ere long events will be the interpreters, who will solve this perplexing enigma without injury to sheep or crops. Do thou give heed thereto; and announce these words, even as I utter them, to those who live that life which is a race towards death: and bear in mind, when thou dost write them, not to disguise the condition in which thou hast seen the tree, which now hath twice been here despoiled. Whoso plunders it or rends it, through blasphemy in act offends God, who created it sacred to His service alone. For eating thereof, the first-created soul for more than five thousand years in pain and longing pined for Him, who in His own person expiated that bite. Thy intellect must be torpid, if it doth not recognize that there is a special cause for its great height and its strangely shapen summit<sup>1</sup>. And had not thy mind been encrusted by worldly thoughts as by the water of Elsa<sup>2</sup>, and discoloured by the pleasure thereof as the mulberry was by Pyramus<sup>3</sup>, from all these incidents without further aid thou wouldst recognize God's justice in the prohibition not to touch the tree, in its moral interpretation. But, inasmuch as I perceive that thine intellect is petrified and stained withal, so that thou art dazzled by my illuminative speech, I desire further that thou bear it stored in thy memory, if not in words, at least in outline, for the same reason for which a pilgrim carries his staff girt with palm-leaves<sup>4</sup>.

And I: 'Like wax stamped with a seal, which bears unchanged the figure imprinted on it, my brain is now stamped

The effect  
of the water  
of Lethe.

<sup>1</sup> It widened as it ascended (cp. *Purg.* xxxii. 40, 41), in order that its branches might not be reached by the hands of spoilers.

<sup>2</sup> A stream with petrifying power.

<sup>3</sup> See note on *Purg.* xxvii. 39 (p. 266).

<sup>4</sup> As a memorial token.

with your impress. But wherefore doth your longed-for utterance soar so far above my sight, that it loses it the more, in proportion as it applies itself to understand it?' 'It is in order that thou mayst estimate the school whereof thou hast been a disciple,' she said, 'and mayst see how little its teaching can follow in the wake of my discourse; and that thou mayst learn, that your ways are as far removed from the ways of God, as the highest of the revolving spheres is distant from the earth.' Whereupon I replied: 'I remember not that I ever alienated myself from you, nor for this doth my conscience reproach me.' 'If thou canst not remember it,' she smilingly replied, 'prithee recall to mind, how but now thou didst drink of Lethe; and as from smoke we infer the presence of fire, this forgetfulness of thine is a clear proof that the attention thou didst pay to another was culpable<sup>1</sup>. Henceforward in sooth what I say will be clear, so far as it may fitly be revealed to thy unpractised view.'

And now in full brightness and with lingering steps the sun had reached the meridian circle, which varies its place according to the point of view, when, even as one who precedes a company as guide halts, if he finds some strange object in his track, the seven Ladies halted where the pale shade ceased, the like of which beneath green leaves and dark branches above their cold brooks the Alps wear. In front of them methought I saw Euphrates and Tigris issue from a single fountain<sup>2</sup>, and lingeringly part, like friends, from one another. 'O light, O glory of the human race, what stream is this, which here diffuses itself from a single source, and

<sup>1</sup> Because it is only of sins that Lethe causes forgetfulness.

<sup>2</sup> The idea that these two rivers had a common source is found in Lucan (*Phars.* iii. 256-9) and other writers. Dante is reminded of this by seeing the common source of Lethe and Eunoë.

Dante  
drinks of  
the water  
of Eunoë.



stamped on my brain, thou wilt see me approach thy beloved tree, and crown myself then with those leaves, whereof the subject and thine aid will make me worthy. So rarely, O Father, do men pluck them for an emperor's or a poet's triumph (woe worth the meanness, the shame of human aspirations!), that the heart of the gladsome Delphic god must be gladdened by the foliage of the Peneius<sup>1</sup>, when it inspires any one with longing for it. A tiny spark is followed by a burst of flame; after me perchance by worthier voices prayer will be made to evoke a reply from Cirrha<sup>2</sup>.

At various entrance-gates doth the lamp of the world rise to mortals<sup>3</sup>; but when he comes forth from that point which joins four circles with three crosses<sup>4</sup>, his course is most propitious, and he is in combination with the most beneficent constellation<sup>5</sup>, and modifies and moulds the material substance of the earth most after his own fashion. It was nigh this point that he had made morning there and eventide here, and the whole of that hemisphere was now in light, and the opposite hemisphere in darkness, when I saw that Beatrice had turned leftward and was facing the sun; never did eagle so steadfastly gaze thereat. And even as from the primal ray the reflected ray proceeds, springing upward again, like a pilgrim longing to return, so from her action, which through the medium of sight passed into my imagination, did mine

Dante and Beatrice ascend to the sphere of fire.

<sup>1</sup> The bay-tree.

<sup>2</sup> The name of Cirrha, the port of Delphi, is here used for the oracle itself.

<sup>3</sup> i.e. the sun rises at different points of the horizon.

<sup>4</sup> The time here meant is the vernal equinox, when the ecliptic, the equator, and the equinoctial colure intersect one another and the horizon, and the intersections of the three former of these circles with the horizon form three crosses.

<sup>5</sup> Aries.

own action arise, and beyond our wont I fixed mine eyes upon the sun. Many a thing, which defies our powers here, is possible there, in virtue of the spot<sup>1</sup>, which was created expressly for the human race. For a short space I endured it, yet not so short that I failed to see the orb sparkle all round, like iron that comes forth molten from the fire; and on a sudden the light of day appeared to be increased twofold, as if He who hath the power had adorned the heaven with another sun. Beatrice kept her eyes intent on the eternal spheres, and I fixed mine on her, withdrawing them from above; and by looking at her I became inwardly such, as Glaucus became by tasting of the herb, which made him a peer of the marine divinities<sup>2</sup>. To express in words the change from an earthly to a heavenly nature is beyond our power; wherefore let this example suffice to him, for whom God's grace hath the experience thereof in store. Whether I was only that part of me which Thou didst last create<sup>3</sup>, O Love who reignest in Heaven, Thou knowest; Thou by Thy light didst raise me on high.

Question-  
ings in  
Dante's  
mind.

When the motion of the spheres, which through their longing for Thee Thou causest to be eternal, by the harmony which Thou dost modulate and distinguish had attracted my regard, so vast a tract of heaven seemed to me to be kindled by the sun's flame, that never did rain or river create a lake so wide. The unwonted sound and the expanse of light fired me with a desire to learn their cause, more keen than I had ever felt before; whereupon she who read my thoughts even

<sup>1</sup> The Terrestrial Paradise.

<sup>2</sup> Glaucus, a fisherman, in consequence of eating a divine herb which grew near the sea-shore was changed into a sea-god. Ovid, *Met.* xiii. 904 foll.

<sup>3</sup> i. e. whether I was in the spirit only.

as I myself, to calm my excited spirit opened her lips in answer to my question ere I did mine to ask it, and thus began: 'By a false conception of thine own thou dost cloud thine intellect, so that thou seest not what thou wouldst see, hadst thou put away from thee that delusion. 'Thou art not on earth, as thou fanciest; nay, the lightning, when it quits its natural home, ne'er sped so swiftly as thou hast done in returning thither'.<sup>1</sup> If by these brief words expressed with smiles I was extricated from my former doubt, I was the more entangled in the meshes of a new one; and I said: 'A moment ago I was satisfied, and had truce from great wonderment; but now I am marvelling how it comes to pass that I rise above these light substances.' Thereupon, after uttering a sigh of compassion, she regarded me with the expression which a mother wears towards a delirious child, and spake as follows.

'All things are ordered in mutual correspondence; and this order is the formative principle, which causes the universe to resemble God. Therein do the sublime Intelligences trace the footstep of His eternal might, to correspond whereto as its final object the system I mentioned is ordained. In the order whereof I am speaking all natures gravitate, though variously allotted, some nearer to, some more remote from, Him from whom they proceed: hence they shape their course over the ocean of existence to various havens, each of them impelled by the instinct given it to bear it thither. This instinct causes fire to rise toward the moon; this is the motive force in living beings; this binds together and unifies

Beatrice explains the order of the universe.

<sup>1</sup> Dante had risen to the sphere of fire, which intervenes between the earth and the Heaven of the Moon, and was regarded as the 'natural home' of the lightning. As his spirit originally proceeded from God, his ascent is spoken of as 'returning.'

the earth. Nor only the creatures devoid of intelligence doth this bow impel, but those too which possess understanding and love. The Providence which regulates this mighty frame, causes by His light that Heaven<sup>1</sup> to be ever tranquil, within which the most swiftly moving sphere<sup>2</sup> revolves; and now towards it, as to an appointed resting-place, we are borne by the force of that bowstring, which directs to a joyous mark the arrows which it shoots. True it is that, even as oftentimes the form produced agrees not with the artist's design, because the material is dull in responding to it, so ever and anon from this upward course doth the creature turn aside, which hath the power, after being thus impelled, to swerve in another direction (as lightning may be seen to fall from a cloud), if its original impulse, diverted by false pleasure, brings it to the ground. There is no more cause for wonder, if I judge aright, in thy ascending, than in a stream descending to the valley from a mountain height. The marvel in thy case would be, if, when quit of all hindrance, thou hadst remained below, even as repose on earth would be strange in a living flame.' On this she turned heavenward again her looks.

## CANTO II. THE FIRST HEAVEN; OF THE MOON

Address to  
the Reader.

O ye, who, in your eagerness to listen, have followed in a little boat the track of my vessel which pursues its way with song, return to revisit your shores, put not out to sea;

<sup>1</sup> The highest or Empyrean Heaven, which does not move.

<sup>2</sup> The *Primum Mobile*, which is immediately within the Empyrean.



for haply, should ye lose me, ye would remain bewildered. The waters which I enter have never yet been sailed; Minerva wafts me, and Apollo is my pilot, and new Muses point out to me the polar stars. But ye, the few in number, who have timely uplifted your minds toward the bread of Angels<sup>1</sup>, whereon man feeds here, yet leaves not the board sated; ye can safely launch on the main your bark, keeping close to my trace in front of the water which resumes its calm surface. That glorious band who voyaged to Colchis<sup>2</sup>, when they beheld Jason turned ploughman<sup>3</sup>, marvelled not so much as ye will do.

The innate and unquenchable thirst for the realm which exists in the mind of God was bearing us onward wellnigh as swiftly as ye see the heaven move. Beatrice was gazing upward, and I at her; and maybe in so long a time as an arrow takes to hit the mark, to fly through the air, and to be discharged from the peg, I perceived that I had reached a spot, where a wondrous object attracted my sight; whereupon she, from whom the working of my mind could not be concealed, turning toward me as glad as she was fair, said: 'Raise thy mind in gratitude to God, who hath brought us in contact with the first star<sup>4</sup>.' We seemed to me to be enveloped in a cloud, which was luminous, dense, solid and smooth, like a diamond smitten by the sun. Within itself the everlasting pearl received us, even as water receives a ray of light, remaining unbroken the while. If I was a material body, and here on earth it is impossible to conceive how one

The first  
Heaven, of  
the Moon

<sup>1</sup> The knowledge of higher subjects, and especially of theology.

<sup>2</sup> The Argonauts.

<sup>3</sup> One of the labours imposed on Jason in Colchis was to plough the ground with fire-breathing bulls.

<sup>4</sup> The Heaven of the Moon, which they now enter, contains the spirits of those who had neglected their vows.

corporeal substance could admit the presence of another such, which must be the case when one body passes within another, good reason is there why we should be fired the more with longing to behold that essence<sup>1</sup>, wherein the co-existence of our nature and the Deity is seen. There that verity which we hold by faith will not be perceived by a process of reasoning, but will be self-evident, like the primary truths which man believes.

The spots  
on the  
moon's  
surface.

'My Lady,' I replied, 'from the depth of my heart I render thanks to Him, who hath withdrawn me from the mortal world. But tell me, what are the dark spots upon this body, which cause men to tell the story of Cain on earth below<sup>2</sup>?' She smiled awhile, and then replied: 'In sooth the shaft of wonder should not now assail thee, if in matters which the key of sense doth not unlock the views of men are at fault, since reason, as thou seest, even when guided by the senses, hath but feeble wings. But tell me thine own opinion on the question.' And I: 'The variations which we perceive in this heavenly body arise, I imagine, from the rarity and density of its component parts.' And she: 'Assuredly thou wilt see that thy view is sunken in the depths of error, if thou givest good heed to my arguments in answer thereto. The eighth sphere<sup>3</sup> displays to you many luminaries, which both

<sup>1</sup> The Person of Christ.

<sup>2</sup> The 'Man in the Moon' was regarded in the middle ages as representing Cain bearing a bundle of thorns; cp. *Inf.* xx. 126.

<sup>3</sup> The Heaven of the Fixed Stars. Dante argues from the analogy of these to the case of the moon. The fixed stars were recognized as exercising a variety of influences on the characters and fortunes of men, and consequently these influences, and the corresponding differences of brightness and colour in the stars, must proceed from a number of constituent principles, and not from one only. Similarly the differences of light and dark on the surface of the moon must be attributed, not to one cause only, such as rarity and density, but to many.

in the colour and the amount of their light can be seen to differ in appearance. If rarity and density were the sole cause of this, there would be but one influence in all of them, apportioned in some cases more, in some less, in others equally with one another. A variety of influences must needs arise from a number of constituent principles, and according to thy argument it would follow that all but one of these principles would be annulled. Further, if rarity were the cause thou art trying to discover of this dimness, either this planet would be in certain portions thus defective in its matter right through, or it would interchange the leaves in its volume, in the same manner as the fat and the lean are apportioned in a body. If the former of these were the case, this would be apparent in an eclipse of the sun, because its light would be visible through it, as when it is transmitted through any other thin material. This is not so; wherefore we must consider the other alternative, and if so be I disprove that, then thy view will have been proved wrong. If it be true that the rarity doth not run right through, there must be a limit beyond which the dense stratum suffers naught to pass; and from this the other luminary's rays will be thrown back, as colours are reflected by glass coated behind with lead. Now thou wilt say, that there the ray appears duller than elsewhere, because it is reflected from a point further back. From this objection experiment may free thee, if thou wilt essay it—experiment, which is wont to be the source whence human arts are derived. Take three mirrors, and place two of them at the same distance from thee, and let the third, at a greater distance, meet thine eyes between the former two. When thou facest these, let a light be placed behind thee in such wise as to illuminate the three mirrors, and to be reflected back to thee from them all. Albeit the more distant image

doth not present so wide a surface as the other two, yet thou wilt see there, that of necessity it shines as brightly as they.

The order  
of the  
heavenly  
spheres.

‘Now, since thine intellect hath been cleared—even as ground which hath lain beneath the snow, when smitten by the burning rays, remains clear of its previous whiteness and chill—I desire to quicken thee with light so keen, that it will appear to thee to sparkle. Within the Heaven of the divine peace a body<sup>1</sup> revolves, on the influence whereof the essence of all that is contained within it depends. The next Heaven, wherein are so many bright objects, divides that essence among various existences, distinct from it, though contained within it. The other spheres in various changing modes dispose their inborn characteristics to produce their purposes and their effects. These instruments of the world, as thou dost now perceive, proceed in gradation so, that they receive power from above, and exercise it below.

The Intelli-  
gences  
which guide  
them.

‘Give good heed to me, as I advance by way of this point to the truth which thou desirest, so that in future thou mayst be competent by thyself to hold the passage. The motion and power of the sacred spheres must proceed from the blessed Intelligences which move them<sup>2</sup>, as the craft of the hammer doth from the workman; and the Heaven which so many lights adorn<sup>3</sup>, receives its impression from the profound mind<sup>4</sup> which causes it to revolve, and makes itself the seal thereof. And as the soul within your earthly bodies diffuses

<sup>1</sup> The *Primum Mobile*. In this the celestial influences originate, and thence they pass into the eighth Heaven, where they are partitioned among the fixed stars; from these again they are transmitted downwards into the lower spheres.

<sup>2</sup> These are the various Angelic Orders, to each of which one of the spheres of Heaven is assigned. Their nature is explained in Canto xxviii.

<sup>3</sup> The Heaven of the Fixed Stars.

<sup>4</sup> The mind of its presiding Intelligence.



itself through different members, adapted to various faculties, so doth this Intelligence partition its good influence in manifold wise among the stars, while itself revolving in its unity. Each different power forms a different alloy with the precious body that it quickens, wherewith it combines, as life doth with your bodies. Owing to the glad nature whence it is derived, this mingled power shines through the body, as joy beams through the pupil when the eye kindles. From this, and not from density and rarity, proceeds the difference in brightness between star and star: this is the formative principle, which, conformably to its goodness, produces the dull part and the bright part in the moon.'

### CANTO III. THE FIRST HEAVEN, OF THE MOON

That Sun, which erewhile inflamed my heart with love, had revealed to me, alike by proof and disproof, the sweet aspect of fair truth; and I, to confess myself corrected and assured, uplifted my head in fitting measure to express my mind: but a sight presented itself, which held me so fixed in contemplation of it that I forgot my confession. As through glass transparent and clear, or through bright still water, not so deep that the bottom is lost to view, the outlines of our features are so faintly reflected, that a pearl on a white forehead is not harder for our eyes to discern; such was a group of faces I beheld, all eager to speak: whereupon I fell into the opposite mistake to that which caused the man to be enamoured of the fountain<sup>1</sup>. No sooner was I ware of

Spirits who  
had neglect-  
ed their  
vows.

<sup>1</sup> Narcissus mistook the reflexion of his face in the water for a real person; Dante mistook these real persons for reflexions.

them, than, deeming them to be reflected countenances, I turned mine eyes back to see whose they were; and discerning naught, I once more turned them forward, facing the light of my sweet Guide, whose holy eyes were glowing with a smile. 'Marvel not,' she said, 'if I smile at thy puerile conceit, because it doth not yet take its stand on the truth, but, as is its wont, makes thee go astray in error. These are real substances which thou seest, assigned to this sphere by reason of broken vows. Speak to them, then, and listen, and give them credence; for the truthful light which grants them contentment suffers them not to withdraw their footsteps from itself.'

Piccarda  
Donati;  
perfect contentment  
with inferior  
beatitude.

Anon I turned me to the shade which appeared most desirous to converse, and like one overpowered by excess of longing I thus began: 'Thou spirit born in a favouring hour, who in the beams of life eternal dost feel that sweetness, which without being tasted is inconceivable; 'twould please me well, if thou wouldst grant me to know thy name and your condition.' Whereupon with smiling eyes she promptly replied: 'The love we feel doth no more refuse a righteous will's request, than doth that Love, who would have all the members of His court resemble Himself. In the world I was a virgin sister; and if thy mind doth give good heed to me, the increase of my beauty will not hide me from thee, but thou wilt recognize that I am Piccarda<sup>1</sup>, who, being stationed here with these other happy saints, am blessed in the sphere of slowest movement<sup>2</sup>. Our desires, which are

<sup>1</sup> Sister of Forese and Corso Donati, who, having become a nun of the Order of St. Clare, was taken by violence from her convent by Corso, and forced to marry a Florentine noble called Rossellino della Tosa; in a short time after this she was taken ill and died.

<sup>2</sup> The sphere of the Moon, being nearest to the earth, had the smallest revolution, and consequently the slowest movement.

kindled solely at the Holy Spirit's pleasure, find their happiness in being disposed according to His order. And this condition, which seems so lowly, is allotted to us, because our vows were neglected, and in some point imperfect.' And I replied: 'In your wondrous looks there beams a divine element, which transforms you from our previous conceptions: wherefore I was tardy in remembering; but now what thou hast said assists me, so that I can more easily recall thy features. But tell me: ye who here enjoy felicity, do ye desire a more exalted place, that ye may win a clearer sight, a fuller love?' At first with those other shades awhile she smiled; anon with such gladness she replied to me, that methought she was glowing in the primal fire of love: 'Brother, our wills are tranquillized by the power of love, which causes us to desire that only which we have, and to thirst for naught beyond. If we longed for a higher station, our wishes would be at variance with His will who assigns us here; the which thou wilt perceive to be inadmissible in these spheres, if here we must needs exist in love, and if thou dost clearly note what love implies: nay, it is of the essence of this our blessed state to be circumscribed by the divine will, whereby our very wills become one. So that, according as we are ranged, station above station, throughout this realm, the whole realm is well pleased, as is the Sovereign who identifies our will with His: and His will is our peace; it is that sea toward which all things move, both what itself creates, and what Nature produces.' Then was it clear to me that every place in Heaven is Paradise, and yet the grace of the highest good is not dispensed there in one measure only.

But, as it happens that, when one viand cloyes, and the appetite for another still remains, we ask for the latter, and

Piccarda's  
story; the  
empress  
Constance.

decline with thanks the former, so did I both by my looks and words, that I might learn from her what was the web<sup>1</sup>, through which she had not passed the shuttle to the end. 'A perfect life and exalted merit,' she said, 'place in a higher Heaven a Lady<sup>2</sup>, according to whose rule in your world below they wear the habit and the veil, in order that till death they may be, waking or sleeping, in the company of that Spouse, who accepts every vow which love renders conformable to His pleasure. To follow in her footsteps, while still a girl I withdrew from the world and wrapped me in her habit, and took upon me the rule of her Order. Anon men versed rather in sin than in right-doing snatched me from forth my well-loved cloister; and what mine after-life was God knoweth. And that which I say of myself this other lustre, who on my right hand is revealed to thee, glowing with the fullest light our sphere can show, doth to herself apply; she was a sister, and similarly her head was reft of the shadow of the holy veil. But after that against her will and in defiance of right practice she was brought back to the world, the veil of the heart she never put away. This is the light of the great Constance<sup>3</sup>, who from the second wind of Suabia gave birth to the third, the last imperial ruler<sup>4</sup>.' These words she spake to me, and then she began to sing *Ave Maria*; and as she sang she disappeared, as through deep water a weighty substance doth. Mine eyes, which

<sup>1</sup> Piccarda's religious vows, which she had failed to observe unto the end of her life.

<sup>2</sup> Santa Clara of Assisi, who founded her Order under the direction of St. Francis.

<sup>3</sup> The empress Constance, wife of the emperor Henry VI, and mother of Frederic II.

<sup>4</sup> Dante regarded Frederic II's successors as not being Roman emperors, because they had not visited Italy.



followed her to the utmost, so soon as they lost her, reverted to their object of highest longing, and faced full toward Beatrice; but she flashed so brightly on my face, that at first my looks could not endure it; and thus I was more loth to ask my questions.

#### CANTO IV. THE FIRST HEAVEN, OF THE MOON

Between two kinds of food, at an equal distance from him, and equally appetizing, a man, though possessing free will, would die of hunger ere he could bring either of them within range of his teeth. Similarly a lamb would stand still between two fierce and ravening wolves from being equally afraid of them; similarly, again, a hound would stand still between two does. Wherefore, impelled as I was in an equal degree by my two questions, I neither praise nor blame myself for holding my peace, seeing that it was unavoidable. I spake not, but in my looks my longing was expressed, and, accompanying it, my inquiry, which was far more eager than if uttered in articulate speech. Beatrice acted as Daniel did, when he freed Nebuchadnezzar from the wrath which had made him unjustly cruel<sup>1</sup>; and she said: 'I clearly perceive that both one and other of thy longings impels thee so, that thy anxiety hampers itself to such a degree that it cannot find utterance. Thou arguest thus: "If my righteous will is

Dante's difficulties and Beatrice's solutions.

<sup>1</sup> Nebuchadnezzar ordered the Chaldeans to declare to him the dream that he had forgotten, and to interpret it; and when they professed their inability to do so commanded that they should be put to death: Daniel appeased him by telling him the dream and the interpretation. See Dan. ii. Similarly Beatrice comes to Dante's aid, and calms his excitement, by divining his thoughts and expressing in words what he could not express.

steadfast, on what principle is the estimate of my deserts lowered by reason of the violence of others?" Another cause of doubt arises in thy mind from the spirits appearing to return to the stars in accordance with Plato's view. These are the questions which press equally upon thy will; wherefore I will deal first with that which is most baneful<sup>1</sup>.

The relation  
of the spirits  
to their  
spheres.

'Not that one of the Seraphs (let me tell thee) who is nearest to God's presence, not Moses, Samuel, or either John, nor even Mary, have their seats in any other Heaven than those spirits have who but now appeared to thee, nor do they differ the one from the other in the term of their existence: but they all adorn the highest Heaven, and enjoy sweet life in different degrees, through feeling more or less the eternal effluence. Those who revealed themselves here did so, not because this sphere is allotted to them, but to indicate that sphere in the Empyrean which is least exalted. 'Tis thus we must communicate things to your faculties, because it is only from objects of sense that they apprehend what they afterwards render a fit subject for the intellect. This is why Scripture condescends to your capacities, and attributes hands and feet to God, while it means something different; and Holy Church represents Gabriel and Michael for you in the likeness of men, and the other who cured Tobit of his blindness<sup>2</sup>. The view concerning the souls which Timaeus sets

<sup>1</sup> The second question was the more dangerous of the two, because it touched on the origin and nature of the soul, and so might involve unorthodox views. Plato says in the *Timaeus* that the soul of each man proceeds from one of the stars, and that, if his life on earth is virtuous, it returns to that star after death, and spends a blessed existence there. Beatrice, in the course of her remarks on this view, explains that all the Blessed have their abode in the empyrean Heaven, but manifest themselves to Dante in different spheres in order to enable him to understand more clearly their various degrees of blessedness.

<sup>2</sup> Raphael; Tob. xii. 14.

forth doth not correspond to what is seen here, inasmuch as he seems to mean what he saith. He saith that the soul returns to its star, believing that it was taken from that star, when Nature gave it to be the essential part of a man. And haply his opinion is different from what his words seem to signify, and may embody a meaning which should not be lightly treated. If he means that what returns to these revolving spheres is the honour and the blame attaching to their influences, then maybe the arrow from his bow hits an element of truth. A misunderstanding of this principle in former days led almost the whole world astray, so that they per-versely called certain stars Jupiter, Mercury and Mars.

‘The other question which troubles thee hath less venom, inasmuch as its noxious force could not lead thee away from me. If divine justice appears in the eyes of mortals to be unjust, this is an argument in favour of belief, not of sinful unbelief<sup>1</sup>; but seeing that your reasoning powers can fully comprehend this truth, in accordance with thy wishes I will satisfy thee. If violence is when its victim doth not a whit co-operate with him who offers it, these souls were not excusable on this ground; for the will cannot be extinguished without its consent, but acts as Nature doth in the case of flame, though violence deflect it a thousand times; because, if the will yields in any degree, it follows along with the force: and that is what these souls did, when it was in their power to return to their religious home. Their will, had it been sound, like that which held Laurence on the gridiron, and made Mucius unsparing to his hand, would in like manner have forced them to return along the way to the place whence they were dragged, as soon as they were at liberty to do so; but so staunch a will is all too rare. And by these words,

The justice  
of assigning  
these spirits  
to the  
lowest  
sphere.

<sup>1</sup> Because it shows that God’s judgements are incomprehensible.

if thou hast rightly taken them home, the argument is refuted, which ever and anon would have vexed thee in the future.

The case of  
Constance.

‘But now there meets thee a further difficulty so great, that of thyself thou couldst not escape therefrom, but wouldst first be weary. I have told thee as a certainty, that a blessed spirit cannot lie, because it is ever in the presence of the source of truth: and anon thou heardest Piccarda say, that Constance was true to her love of the veil; so that here we seem to contradict each other. Many a time ere this, brother, it hath happened, that to escape from danger a man hath done against his will what he should not have done; Alcmaeon, for instance, who in compliance with his father’s request took his own mother’s life; that he might not fail in filial affection he became merciless. In respect of this point I would have thee consider that the force and the will combine, and act in such a manner that the misdeed hath no excuse. In itself the will consents not to the wrong forced upon it; but it doth consent, in so far as it fears to incur worse suffering if it withdraws itself from the pressure of that force. Wherefore Piccarda in her statement refers to the absolute will, and I to the relative, so that we both speak the truth.’ Such was the rippling of the holy rill, which issued from the fountain whence all truth doth spring; by this both the one and the other of my longings were satisfied.

How doubt  
can minister  
to truth.

‘O beloved of the primal Lover, O divinity,’ I thereupon exclaimed, ‘whose speech doth inundate and warm me so, that it quickens me more and more, the depth of my emotion is not such as adequately to render to you thanks for your favour; but may He who hath the insight and the power thereto recompense it to you. Full well I perceive that our intellect is never content, if it be not illuminated by the truth which comprehends all other truth. In that it reposes, like



a beast in its lair, so soon as it attains it : and it can attain it, for otherwise all desires would be vain. Through this desire doubt rises, like a sapling, from the root of truth ; and this is a natural process, which impels us from height to height unto the summit. This doth induce me, Lady, this doth give me confidence, to inquire of you with all reverence concerning another truth which is obscure to me. I would fain know, whether a man can make such satisfaction to Heaven for broken vows by other good deeds, that they may be equivalent in your scales.' Beatrice regarded me with eyes sparkling with love, so divine, that my powers were overcome and failed me, and with drooping eyes I all but lost consciousness.

## CANTO V. THE FIRST AND SECOND HEAVENS

'Marvel not if I blaze on thee with the heat of love in excess of the measure which is seen on earth, so that I overpower thine eyes ; for that proceeds from my perfect vision, which, in proportion as it perceives the light, makes corresponding advance in respect of the blessing which it hath perceived<sup>1</sup>. I see full well that now on thy mind the eternal light doth shine, which by the mere sight of it ever kindles love ; and if another object leads men's desires astray, 'tis but a misapprehended glimmer of that light, which reveals itself therein. Thou desirest to know, whether by other services a man can compensate for broken vows sufficiently to secure his soul from a further claim.' Such were the words wherewith Beatrice commenced this Canto ; and like one who doth not interrupt his speech, she pursued as follows her holy

The question of compensation for broken vows.

<sup>1</sup> i.e. is itself more illuminated by that light.

train of argument. 'The greatest gift which God, as creator, of His bounty bestowed, and the most conformable to His goodness, and most highly prized by Him, was the freedom of the will, wherewith all reasoning beings, and only they, were and still are endowed. Now thou wilt perceive, if thou arguest from this, the grave importance of the vow, if it be so made that God's approval accompanies thy approval; seeing that, when the agreement is ratified between God and the man, a sacrifice is made of this so great treasure, and is made voluntarily. What then can be repaid in compensation? If thou thinkest to make good use of that which thou hast offered<sup>1</sup>, what is this but doing good deeds with ill-gotten gains?

When and  
how far  
commuta-  
tion is  
allowable.

'Of the main point thou now art certified; but inasmuch as Holy Church doth give dispensation in that matter, which seems in opposition to the truth I have set forth to thee, 'tis well that thou shouldst sit yet a while at table, because the solid food which thou hast taken requires further aid for thee to digest it. Open thy mind to receive what I disclose to thee, and store it there, for to have heard a thing, without remembering it, doth not constitute knowledge. Two things combine to form the essence of this sacrifice; whereof the one is the service which forms it, the other the vow itself. The latter of these can never be cancelled save by being observed, and concerning it I have stated the rule so strictly above; for which reason to the Jews the offering in any case was indispensable, albeit some kinds of offerings might be commuted<sup>2</sup>, as thou art well aware. The other, which is known to thee as the matter of the vow, can easily be of such a nature that without transgression it may be 'commuted for other matter. Yet let no man exchange the burden on his

<sup>1</sup> i. e. if, after making an offering of your free-will, you recall it, and then think to use it in God's service.

<sup>2</sup> See Lev. xxvii.

shoulders on his own authority, without the turning both of the silver and the golden key<sup>1</sup>; and let him regard every commutation as vain, if the thing relinquished be not contained in that which is undertaken as four is in six<sup>2</sup>. Wherefore for anything which weighs in itself so heavily as to overbalance every counterpoise, satisfaction cannot be made by means of other outlay. Let not men take vows in a trifling spirit: be faithful to them, yet not perverse in so doing, as Jephtha was in offering the first object which he saw; whose duty it was rather to say: "I have done amiss," than by keeping his vow to commit a greater sin. So too thou wilt rightly convict the great chieftain of the Greeks<sup>3</sup> of an act of folly, by reason of which Iphigenia lamented the beauty of her face, and caused all men, whether wise or simple, who heard the tale of so monstrous a rite, to shed tears for her. Christians, be more considerate in what ye undertake; be not like a feather moved by every wind, nor deem that every water can cleanse you<sup>4</sup>. Ye have the Old Testament and the New, and the pastor of the Church to guide you; let this suffice to insure your salvation. If unrighteous covetousness suggest to you aught else, quit you like men, be not like silly sheep, so that the Jew who dwells in your midst should deride you. Behave not like the lamb, which deserts its mother's milk, and in innocent sportive mood, following its bent, brings itself to harm.' In such wise, even as I write it, did Beatrice address me; anon with ardent longing she turned her toward that quarter<sup>5</sup>, where the universe hath fullest life.

<sup>1</sup> The two keys represent the power of the priest-confessor; cp. *Purg.* ix, 117.

<sup>2</sup> That which is substituted must be half as great again.

<sup>3</sup> Agamemnon.

<sup>4</sup> i. e. that you can easily obtain dispensation.

<sup>5</sup> The Empyrean.

The second  
Heaven, of  
Mercury.

Her ceasing to speak and the change in her look imposed silence on my eager spirit, which still had fresh questions in store ; and swift as an arrow, which ere the string ceases to vibrate strikes the mark, we sped to the second realm<sup>1</sup>. There did I see my Lady so gladsome, when once she passed within the light of that Heaven, that the planet thereby increased in brilliance. And if the star thus smiled with altered aspect, how was it with me, who merely from being a mortal man am liable to every phase of change ! As in a still clear fishpond the fish move towards an object, which comes from without in such wise that they deem it to be their food, so saw I more than a thousand lustrous lights move towards us, and proceeding from each were heard the words : ‘ Lo, here is one who will augment our love ’ : and as each approached us, the spirit was seen to be full of joy by the luminous brightness which proceeded from it. Bethink thee, Reader, if the tale here commenced went no farther, what painful craving for fuller knowledge would be thine ; and of thyself thou wilt understand how great was my anxiety to learn from these their state, so soon as they revealed themselves to mine eyes.

The  
emperor  
Justinian.

‘ Thou spirit born in a happy hour, whom grace permits, ere the warfare of life is over, to see the thrones of the eternal triumph, the light which is diffused throughout the whole Heaven doth illuminate us ; wherefore, if it be thy wish to be enlightened by us, satisfy thyself to thy heart’s content.’ These words were addressed to me by one of those saintly spirits ; and Beatrice said : ‘ Speak out with confidence, and trust them as if they were divinities.’ ‘ I clearly see how thou art enveloped in thine own light, and that it proceeds

<sup>1</sup> This is the Heaven of Mercury, where are the spirits of those who were incited to noble deeds by the desire of fame.



from thine eyes, because they glisten as thou smilest; but who thou art I know not, nor wherefore, lofty spirit, the rank of that sphere is assigned to thee, which is veiled from mortals by another's<sup>1</sup> rays.' Thus spake I, facing the light which had before accosted me; whereupon it assumed a brightness far surpassing its former sheen. Even as the sun conceals itself by excess of light, when the heat hath consumed the dense vapours' tempering influence, so through increase of joy the saintly form was hidden within its brilliancy, and when it was thus wholly enwrapped, it replied to me as the following Canto sings.

## CANTO VI. THE SECOND HEAVEN, OF MERCURY.

'From the time when Constantine turned the eagle's flight against the course of heaven, which it followed under the guidance of the ancient hero who took Lavinia to wife<sup>2</sup>, for two hundred years and more the bird of God maintained its position at the extremity of Europe<sup>3</sup>, nigh to the mountains whence it first came forth<sup>4</sup>; there beneath the shadow of its sacred wings it governed the world, passing from hand to

Justinian  
reveals his  
identity.

<sup>1</sup> The sun's. Mercury, in which they now are, owing to its nearness to the sun is seldom visible to the naked eye.

<sup>2</sup> The turning of the flight of the eagle (the symbol of Roman sovereignty) against the course of heaven (from west to east) signifies the removal of the administrative centre of the Roman empire by Constantine from Rome to Constantinople; the eagle had previously flown from east to west, when Aeneas brought it from Troy to Italy.

<sup>3</sup> From the foundation of Constantinople to the accession of Justinian somewhat more than 200 years elapsed.

<sup>4</sup> The mountains are the chain of Mt. Ida behind the plain of Troy, which was relatively near to Constantinople.

hand, and thus by succession into mine it came. Emperor I was, and I am Justinian, who, inspired by the primal Love whose power I feel, removed what was redundant and what was useless from the body of the laws<sup>1</sup>. Ere I devoted my attention to that work, I believed that there was but one nature in Christ, and was satisfied with that belief; but the blessed Agapetus, who was supreme pastor, by the words he spake directed me towards the orthodox faith<sup>2</sup>. I believed him, and now I see his article of faith as clearly as thou seest that of contradictories one must be false, the other true. So soon as I walked in accordance with the Church, it pleased God of His goodness to inspire me with the mighty task<sup>3</sup>, and to that I wholly devoted me: and mine arms I entrusted to my Belisarius, with whom Heaven's right hand was so closely allied, that this was a sign that I should rest therefrom.

The development  
of the  
Roman  
power.

'Here then mine answer to thy first question ends'; but the nature of that reply constrains me to pursue a sequel to it, in order that thou mayst see how little men are justified in proceeding against the sacred emblem, both those who claim it as their own and those who oppose it<sup>4</sup>. Consider what

<sup>1</sup> This describes the reform and codifying of the Roman law by Justinian.

<sup>2</sup> In reality Justinian was guiltless of Monophysite views, which are the heresy here spoken of; the person connected with him who held them was the Patriarch Anthimus, who was convicted of this in Justinian's presence by Agapetus, when he was sent on an embassy to Constantinople in 515 by Theodatus, king of the Goths.

<sup>3</sup> The reform of the laws.

<sup>4</sup> The former of the factions here intended is the Ghibellines, the latter the Guelfs; as both of these, though in different ways, were now impairing the authority of the Empire, Justinian proceeds to sketch the history of the development of the power and majesty of Rome in order to incriminate them.

mighty deeds have made it worthy of reverence': and he commenced his tale from the hour when Pallas died to endow it with the sovereignty<sup>1</sup>. 'Thou knowest that for three centuries and upwards it made its abode in Alba, until at last the three against the three<sup>2</sup> once more contended it for it. Thou knowest, too, what it did under seven kings from the rape of the Sabines until Lucretia's wrong, in conquering the neighbouring tribes around. Thou knowest what it did, when borne by the illustrious Romans against Brennus, against Pyrrhus, and against the other chieftains and confederates; whence Torquatus, and Quinctius who was named from his unkempt locks<sup>3</sup>, and the Decii and the Fabii won the fame which I rejoice to embalm. By it was brought low the pride of the Arabs<sup>4</sup>, who following Hannibal crossed the Alpine chain whence flows the Po. Beneath it in their youth Scipio and Pompey triumphed, and to that hill at whose foot thou wast born it showed no mercy<sup>5</sup>. Anon, when the time was nigh, at which Heaven willed to bring back the whole world to its own serene mood<sup>6</sup>, Caesar assumed it by the will of Rome; and what it accomplished between the Var and Rhine the Isère and Saône beheld, and the Seine withal, and every valley from which the Rhone is filled<sup>7</sup>. That which it

<sup>1</sup> Pallas, who was fighting on the side of Aeneas, was slain by Turnus, and in consequence of this Turnus was slain by Aeneas. By Turnus' death Aeneas became possessed of Lavinia, and of the kingdom of Latinus. Thus the death of Pallas ultimately caused the eagle to obtain the sovereignty.

<sup>2</sup> The Horatii and the Curiatii.

<sup>3</sup> Cincinnatus.

<sup>4</sup> The Carthaginians.

<sup>5</sup> Faesulae (Fiesole), which was built on a hill overlooking Florence, was said by tradition to have been destroyed by the Romans after the defeat of Catiline.

<sup>6</sup> When the time of Christ's coming approached.

<sup>7</sup> This sentence describes the scene of Caesar's campaigns in Gaul.

achieved after it started from Ravenna and crossed the Rubicon, was of so rapid flight that neither tongue nor pen could follow it. Toward Spain it wheeled round its host, and anon toward Durazzo<sup>1</sup>; and it smote Pharsalia with such force, that grief was felt on the hot Nile's banks<sup>2</sup>. Antandros<sup>3</sup> and the Simois, its starting-place, it revisited, and the spot where Hector lies, and then it roused itself in an evil hour for Ptolemy; thence it descended like a lightning-flash on Juba, and anon turned toward your western lands<sup>4</sup>, where it heard the Pompeian trumpet. To that which it did under the next standard-bearer<sup>5</sup> Brutus and Cassius direfully testify in Hell, and Modena and Perugia it caused to mourn<sup>6</sup>. By reason of it, too, the sad Cleopatra laments, who, fleeing before it, by means of the snake inflicted on herself a dire untimely death. In his hands it sped as far as the Red Sea shore; in his hands it caused the world to repose in such peace, that Janus' shrine was closed. But all that the emblem which is the subject of my speech had accomplished before and was to accomplish thereafter for the empire of the world which is subject to it, makes but a dim and feeble show, if with clear eye and unbiassed feelings we regard it as wielded by the third Caesar<sup>7</sup>; for the living Justice, who inspires me, granted to it, in his hands of whom I speak, the glory of

<sup>1</sup> Dyrrhachium, to which place Caesar crossed the Adriatic from Brundisium in pursuit of Pompey.

<sup>2</sup> Because Pompey was slain in Egypt.

<sup>3</sup> Antandros is mentioned because Aeneas set sail from thence.

<sup>4</sup> Spain, where the battle of Munda was fought against the sons of Pompey.

<sup>5</sup> The emperor Augustus.

<sup>6</sup> Under Augustus a murderous battle took place before Mutina, and Perugia underwent a long siege.

<sup>7</sup> Tiberius, in whose reign Christ was put to death.



avenging His wrath<sup>1</sup>. Now mark the strangeness of my repetition<sup>2</sup>: thereafter in Titus' hands it proceeded to avenge that which avenged the primal sin<sup>3</sup>. And when the holy Church was bitten by the Lombard tooth, it was beneath its wings that Charlemagne by his victory succoured her<sup>4</sup>.

'Now canst thou form a judgement of those classes of men whom I erewhile accused, and of their sins, which are the cause of all your misfortunes. The one opposes to the world-embracing standard the yellow lilies, while the other appropriates it to a party<sup>5</sup>; so that it is hard to see which is most in fault. Let the Ghibellines practise their devices beneath another emblem, for of that emblem he is ever an unworthy follower who alienates it from justice: nor with his Guelfs let this younger Charles<sup>6</sup> overthrow it, but let him fear the claws whereby a mightier lion hath been flayed. Ofttimes ere this the sons have rued their fathers' crimes, nor let any think that for Charles's lilies God will change his bearings.

'This little planet is adorned with those good spirits, who lived laborious days that honour and fame might accrue to

Guelfs and  
Ghibellines.

Spirits of the  
ambitious.

<sup>1</sup> The argument is this:—As God willed that Christ's death should be authorized by Pilate, a vice-gerent of the Roman emperor, and in His death the whole human race was vicariously punished to satisfy God's justice, it was implied that God recognized the Empire as *de iure* the governing power in the world. Cp. *De Monarchia*, ii. 13, ll. 29-49.

<sup>2</sup> The repetition is the use of the word 'avenge' in two different applications.

<sup>3</sup> By the destruction of Jerusalem the Roman eagle took vengeance on the Jews for causing Christ's death.

<sup>4</sup> When Desiderius, king of the Lombards, persecuted the Church, Pope Adrian I called in Charlemagne to its defence. As a matter of fact, however, when this took place, Charlemagne was not yet crowned emperor of the West.

<sup>5</sup> The Guelfs oppose to the eagle the *fleur-de-lis* of France, i.e. the Angevins; the Ghibellines treat the eagle as their special emblem.

<sup>6</sup> Charles II of Apulia, now the leader of the Guelf party.

them; and when toward that aim men's desires rise, thus deviating from the right course, the rays of the true love must ever ascend upward with less fervour. But our joy in part consists in balancing our rewards against our deserts, because we see that they are neither less nor greater; hence doth the living Justice so tranquillize our feelings within us, that they can never be perverted to any unrighteousness. As on earth voices of different tone form sweet concord, so in our life in Heaven the different grades give forth sweet harmony among these spheres.

Romeo.

‘Within this pearl also the light of Romeo<sup>1</sup> shines, whose fair and noble deeds were ill recompensed: but the Provençals who attacked him have not whereat to rejoice; and so it is, that he who regards another's good deeds as a wrong to himself is following the road to ruin. Each of Raymond Berenger's four daughters became a queen, and this was accomplished for him by Romeo, a man of low estate and a pilgrim; anon calumnious tongues incited him to demand an account from this just one, who had paid him his own with usury. In poverty and old age he quitted that court; and did the world know how great courage he showed in begging by morsels his daily bread, much as it praises him, it would praise him more.’

## CANTO VII. THE SECOND HEAVEN, OF MERCURY

‘Hosanna, holy God of hosts, who by Thy brightness dost illuminate from above the happy fires of these realms!’ These

<sup>1</sup> Chief minister of Raymond Berenger IV, count of Provence. The story of his banishment which is here given is legendary.

words, as it returned to its singing, that spirit, on whose head two forms of glory<sup>1</sup> equally rest, appeared to me to chant; then both it and the others betook them to their dance, and like swift-flashing sparks were lost to my sight by sudden distance. I was possessed by a doubt, and was saying to myself: 'Tell it to her, tell it to my Lady, who quenches my thirst with her sweet drops of wisdom'; but that feeling of reverence, which at the mere sound of *BE* and *ICE* masters me completely, caused me to droop my head like one falling asleep. In this mood Beatrice suffered me not long to remain, but beaming on me with a smile, which even in the fire would make a man happy, she thus began: 'Through the guidance of my infallible judgement I am aware, that the question, how a just vengeance could be justly punished, hath set thee thinking; but I will at once unburden thy mind, and do thou give heed, for my words will impart to thee a profound doctrine. Because he would not endure a beneficial restriction on his power of will, the man who was not born<sup>2</sup>, by bringing damnation on himself, brought it also on all his descendants; from which cause for long ages in the world below the human race lay sick in dire estrangement, until the Word of God was pleased to descend to the place, where by the sole agency of His eternal Love He united in one person with Himself that nature which had alienated itself from its Creator. Now regard well that which I proceed to tell thee: so long as this nature was in unison with its Creator, it was innocent and good, as it was created; yet by its own agency it was exiled from Paradise, because it deviated from the way of truth and from its rightful life. Consequently, if the penalty which the cross provided be estimated in reference to

Was the destruction of Jerusalem a just retribution?

<sup>1</sup> The titles of emperor and lawgiver.

<sup>2</sup> Adam.

the nature which Christ took upon Him, no punishment was ever so justly inflicted; and, correspondingly, none was so unjust, if we regard the person that underwent it, with which that nature was combined. Hence from a single act two different results proceeded; for one and the same death was a satisfaction to God and to the Jews<sup>1</sup>; by reason thereof the earth shook<sup>2</sup> and Heaven opened. Henceforward it should no longer appear to thee a difficulty, when it is said that an act of just vengeance was afterwards avenged by a just tribunal.

The  
mystery of  
Redemp-  
tion.

‘But now I perceive that thy mind by a succession of thoughts is entangled within a difficulty, from which it is longingly waiting for deliverance. Thou sayest: “I fully comprehend what I hear, but wherefore God preferred this method in particular for our redemption is a mystery to me.” This ordinance, brother, is hidden from the eyes of every one, whose nature hath not attained maturity in ardent love. Nevertheless, seeing that this question is so much studied and so little understood, I will tell thee wherefore this method was the fittest. The divine Goodness, which is alien to a grudging spirit, while in itself it burns with love, doth sparkle so brightly, that it manifests in others its eternal beauties. Whatsoever emanates immediately from God is thereafter eternal, because when He sets His seal the impression is indelible. Whatsoever proceeds immediately from Him is wholly free, because it is not subject to the power of things of later birth. It resembles Him more closely, and therefore is more pleasing in His sight; for the fire of divine

<sup>1</sup> To God as an atonement for sin, to the Jews as gratifying their malice.

<sup>2</sup> The earthquake is mentioned as an evidence of God’s displeasure with the Jews.



love, which irradiates all things, shines more brightly in that which most resembles it. Of all these things the human being hath the privilege; and if one of them is lacking, he needs must fall from his noble estate. It is sin alone which deprives him of his liberty, and renders him unlike the Highest Good, for which cause he is but little irradiated by His light; nor can he ever regain his high position, unless, to counterbalance his criminal enjoyments, he makes up the amount reduced by sin by suffering the due penalty. Your nature, when it sinned completely in the person of its first parent, was excluded from these prerogatives, as it was from Paradise; nor could it otherwise be reinstated (as careful reflexion will teach thee), than by passing one of the two following fords—either that God of His benignity alone should have granted pardon, or that man of himself should have made satisfaction for his folly. Now fix thine eyes deep in the abyss of the eternal counsel, concentrating them attentively, so far as in thee lies, on my discourse. That finite being man could never make satisfaction, seeing that he could not descend so low in humility by subsequent obedience, as he had aimed at ascending high by his disobedience<sup>1</sup>; and this is the reason why man was rendered incapable of making satisfaction of himself. Hence it was needful that God should restore man to his integrity by the ways at His command—by one only, I mean, or by both together. But inasmuch as the work of him who works approves itself as more excellent in proportion as it sets forth in larger measure the goodness of the heart whence it proceeds, the divine Goodness, which is imprinted on the world, was pleased to

<sup>1</sup> Our first parents aspired to become 'as gods' by eating of the forbidden fruit (Gen. iii. 5); now no self-abasement on man's part could furnish an equivalent for this.

set on foot your restitution to your high estate by both His methods at once <sup>1</sup>; nor hath there been or will there be from the first day until the final night a proceeding equally sublime and magnificent, either through the one or the other agency. For God was more bountiful in giving Himself, in order to enable man to recover from the Fall, than if by his *fiat* alone He had pardoned him; and every other way would have failed to satisfy justice, had not the Son of God abased Himself to take our flesh.

Why some  
created  
things are  
incorrupt-  
ible, others  
corruptible.

‘Now, that I may fully satisfy every longing of thine, I go back to clear up a certain point, that in that matter thou mayst see as clearly as I. Thou sayest: “I see that the water and the fire, and air and earth, and all their combinations come to corruption and have but a brief stay, and yet these things were God’s creations; wherefore, if what I said above is true, they should be incorruptible. The Angels, brother, and the region of pure matter wherein thou art, may rightly be spoken of as created in the perfect state in which they now are; but the elements which thou hast named, and the things which are composed of them, received their nature from a power itself created. The matter was created whereof they consist; created, too, was the constituent power, which resides in these stars that revolve around them. The life of the brute creation and of plants is drawn forth by the brightness and the motion of the holy lights <sup>2</sup> from the combination of elements in them, which is endued with power thereto. But your life is breathed into you immediately by the highest Benevolence, who inspires it with love of Himself, so that ever after it desires Him. And from this thou mayst further infer your resurrection, if thou dost reflect

<sup>1</sup> By the combined agency of mercy and justice.

<sup>2</sup> The stars.

how the human body was then made, when both our first parents were created <sup>1</sup>.

## CANTO VIII. THE THIRD HEAVEN, OF VENUS

The world was wont to believe to its peril that the fair Cyprian goddess <sup>2</sup>, revolving in the third epicycle <sup>3</sup>, beamed forth delirious love; for which reason the ancient folk in their old-world error not only worshipped her with sacrifices and votive cries, but paid honour to Dione and Cupid, the former as her mother, the latter as her son, who, they said, reposed in Dido's bosom <sup>4</sup>; and from her, with whom I commence this Canto, they derived the name of the star that courts the sun, now following, now in front <sup>5</sup>. Of my ascent into it I was not aware; but that I was within it the sight of my Lady's augmented beauty amply proved <sup>6</sup>. And as within a flame a spark is seen, and as within a voice a second voice is distinguished, when one holds the note and the other comes and goes; so within that luminary did I see other lights revolving with greater or less speed, in proportion, I ween, to

The third Heaven, of Venus; the spirits of lovers.

<sup>1</sup> The human bodies both of Adam and Eve were created immediately by God, and therefore must be immortal.

<sup>2</sup> Venus.

<sup>3</sup> The term 'epicycle' means a circle, the centre of which is carried round upon another circle; according to Ptolemy each planet moved in such a circle of its own in addition to the revolution of the sphere to which it belonged. The epicycle of Venus is called the third, because the sphere of Venus is the third in order in the heavens.

<sup>4</sup> Cp. Virg. *Aen.* i. 715-9.

<sup>5</sup> Sometimes as the evening star, sometimes as the morning star.

<sup>6</sup> The third Heaven, which they have now entered, contains the spirits of lovers.

their eternal powers of vision. Never from a chill cloud did winds, whether visible or otherwise, descend with speed so great, that they would not appear tardy and slow to one who had seen those divine lights approach us, ceasing from the circling dance which they had erewhile commenced amid the exalted Seraphim. And from among the foremost who revealed themselves Hosanna was heard in such tones, that thenceforward I have not ceased to long once more to hear it.

Carlo  
Martello.

Anon one of their number drew nearer to us, and thus alone began: 'We would fain do thy pleasure, one and all, that thou mayst win joy from us. Our movement corresponds in its circular form, its eternal continuance, and its intense longing with that of the heavenly Principalities<sup>1</sup>, whom thou, when a citizen of earth, didst thus address: "Ye who by your intelligence move the third Heaven<sup>2</sup>"; and so full of love are we, that, to please thee, we should not less enjoy a brief repose.' Mine eyes, after they had appealed in reverence to my Lady, and she had satisfied them with the assurance of her approbation, reverted to that light whose promise had been so bounteous; and 'Say who are ye?' were the words impressed with deep emotion which I uttered. How marvellously then did I see it increase in magnitude and brightness through the fresh delight, which, as I spake, was superadded to its former bliss! Such was its aspect when it said to me<sup>3</sup>: 'The time was brief which I spent in the world below; had it been longer, much evil that shall be would not

<sup>1</sup> These are the Intelligences, which preside over the third Heaven.

<sup>2</sup> This is the first line of the first Canzone of the *Convivio*.

<sup>3</sup> The speaker is Carlo Martello, eldest son of Charles of Anjou, king of Naples. He married Clemence, daughter of Rudolf of Hapsburg. In 1294 he visited Florence, and he probably met Dante on that occasion. He died in 1295, aged twenty-four.



have been. My joy which beams around me keeps me hidden from thee, and by it I am concealed, like the silk-worm enfolded in its cocoon. Thou didst love me much, and thou hadst good cause; for, had I remained on earth below, I should have manifested to thee not the leaves only of my love. The territory <sup>1</sup> which on its left bank the Rhone laves after mingling with the Sorga, looked forward to me in due time as its ruler; and so did that horn of Italy, which embraces the towns of Bari, Gaëta and Catona, from where the Tronto and the Verde flow into the sea <sup>2</sup>. Already on my forehead shone the crown of that land which the Danube irrigates after quitting the German shores; and fair Sicily, which between Pachynus and Pelorum <sup>3</sup>, above the bay which is most exposed to the east wind's onset, is darkened, not by Typhoeus' agency, but by that of nascent sulphur, would still have been looking forward to her succession of kings, descended through me from Charles and Rudolph, had not tyranny, which ever rouses to fury subject peoples, moved Palermo to cry: "Do them to death <sup>4</sup>." And could my brother <sup>5</sup> foresee this, he would at the present time shrink from employing the greedy poverty of the Catalans, that it might not injure his cause; for verily there is good need that he

<sup>1</sup> Carlo now describes the countries which he either ruled or had the prospect of ruling. These are (1) Provence, (2) Apulia, (3) Hungary, (4) Sicily.

<sup>2</sup> These two rivers form the northern limit of the kingdom of Apulia, flowing respectively into the eastern and the western sea.

<sup>3</sup> The southern and northern extremities of the east coast of Sicily; the land between these was darkened by the smoke of Etna, under which mountain the giant Typhoeus was fabled to lie.

<sup>4</sup> The massacre of the Sicilian Vespers is referred to, which caused the expulsion of the French from the island.

<sup>5</sup> Robert. He had introduced Catalan mercenaries, whose greed and violence had exasperated the people in the kingdom of Naples.

should make provision, either himself or by others' aid, that on his heavily freighted bark an additional weight may not be placed. His avaricious nature, which descended from one that was liberal, would need such officials as would not care to hoard.'

The origin  
of varieties  
of character  
in men.

'Inasmuch as I believe that thou seest in His face, who is the aim and source of all good, as fully as I myself am conscious of it, the supreme joy which thy words, my Lord, communicate to me, my gladness is increased; and this also delights me, that thou seest in God that I believe it. Thou hast made me joyful; do thou then likewise explain to me, since by thy words thou hast aroused a doubt within me, how from a sweet seed a bitter fruit can spring.' Thus spake I to him; and he to me: 'If I can make clear to thee a certain truth<sup>1</sup>, the subject of thine inquiry will be as manifest to thee, as now it is hidden from thee. The highest Good, who causes the whole realm through which thou art ascending to revolve and to be satisfied, makes his providence to be an active power in these mighty bodies<sup>2</sup>; and not only are these creations ordained in the mind which is perfect in itself, but along with them all that conduces to their right working. Wherefore whatever is discharged from this bow descends ordained to a foreseen purpose, like a thing directed to its mark: were it not so, the effect of the working of the Heavens through which thou art journeying would be to produce, not a perfect scheme, but a chaos: and that cannot be, unless the Intelligences which direct these spheres are defective, and the First Cause withal, who in that case hath not created them perfect. Wouldst thou have this truth

<sup>1</sup> The truth here meant is the operation of God's providence through the influences of the stars in directing and modifying the order of nature.

<sup>2</sup> The planets.

more clearly stated?' And I: 'Tis needless, for I see that it cannot be that Nature should fall short in providing what is requisite.' Then he once more<sup>1</sup>: 'Say now, would man lose on earth, if he were not a social being?' 'Aye,' I replied, 'and of this I need no proof.' 'And can he be so, unless in the world below there are various modes of life in various functions? He cannot, if your Master's<sup>2</sup> writings say the truth.' Thus he proceeded by inference to the present point; anon he concluded thus: 'The roots, then, from which your operations arise, must needs be diverse: and for this reason one is born to be a Solon, another to be a Xerxes, another a Melchisedek, and another like him who lost his son when flying through the air<sup>3</sup>. The nature of the revolving spheres, which, like a seal on wax, imprints itself on mankind, exercises its art well, but doth not favour one family above another. Hence it comes to pass that Esau differs by birth from Jacob, and Romulus springs from so mean a father that he is attributed to Mars. The nature of the son would ever follow a like course to that of the parents, were it not mastered by divine providence.

'Now that which was hidden from thee is revealed to thee; but that thou mayst know that I love thee well, I would have thee possess thyself of a corollary<sup>4</sup>. Ever doth nature, when placed in circumstances ill-suited to it, fail to prosper, like any other seed when out of its congenial soil. And did

The practical lesson.

<sup>1</sup> He goes on to say, that the differences of character and abilities which are required for the working of society cannot be produced by the ordinary process of generation, but are introduced by the stellar influences.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle.

<sup>3</sup> One is born to be a lawgiver, one to be a warrior, another a priest, another a craftsman like Daedalus.

<sup>4</sup> The practical lesson is, that persons should not be forced into professions for which they are ill-suited.

the world below give heed to the foundation laid by nature, by following the lead of this it would cause society to be virtuous: but ye pervert from his natural bent to the service of religion one who is born to gird on the sword, and make him king who is fitted for the pulpit; and thus your course misses the right road.'

## CANTO IX. THE THIRD HEAVEN, OF VENUS

Carlo  
Martello  
withdraws.

After thy Charles, fair Clemence, had enlightened me, he related to me the treacherous treatment which his offspring was fated to receive; but he said: 'Hold thy peace, and let the years roll on'; so that I can say nothing, save that just punishment will follow in the wake of your wrongs. And now the spirit of that holy light had turned toward the Sun that doth replenish it, for He is that Good which avails to enlighten all things. Alas for you, deluded souls, ungodly beings, who turn away your hearts from such perfection, while ye direct your thoughts toward vanity!

Cunizza da  
Romano.

And lo, another of those splendors approached me, and by brightening outwardly intimated its wish to gratify me. The eyes of Beatrice, which as before were fastened on me, assured me of her loving assent to my desire. 'Ah, speedily satisfy my longing, blessed spirit,' I said, 'and prove to me that thou canst read my thoughts.' Whereupon the light, which was as yet unknown to me, from the depths of its lustre whence its chant before proceeded, like one who delights in well doing continued thus: 'In that part of the depraved land of Italy which lies between Rialto and the sources of the Brenta



and the Piava there rises a hill of no great altitude <sup>1</sup>, whence erewhile a firebrand <sup>2</sup> descended, which fiercely assailed the neighbouring lands. From the same root both it and I were sprung; Cunizza was my name, and I shine here because the light of this planet mastered me <sup>3</sup>. But in a glad spirit I look kindly on that which assigned me here, nor doth it vex me, though to your common folk this might haply appear a hard saying.

The brilliant and precious jewel of our Heaven, which is nearest to my side <sup>4</sup>, hath left behind him great fame; and ere it expires the century which is now ending will be increased fivefold <sup>5</sup>. Bethink thee whether a man should not aim at excellence, so that when his first life ends another <sup>6</sup> may survive. Yet of this no thought affects the present rabble which dwells between the Tagliamento and the Adige <sup>7</sup>, nor hath chastisement yet brought them to repentance. But soon it will come to pass that the Paduans at the marsh will discolour <sup>8</sup> the water which laves Vicenza, because the folk are stubborn in refusing that which is their duty <sup>9</sup>. And where the Sile and Cagnano unite <sup>10</sup>, one so vile <sup>11</sup> lords it and carries his head high, that already the net to catch him is being woven. Feltro will yet rue its inhuman pastor's

Corruption  
of the  
Marca Tri-  
vigiana.

<sup>1</sup> The district here meant is the Marca Trivigiana between Venice and the Alps, and the place is the castle of Romano.

<sup>2</sup> The tyrant Azzolino III, whose sister Cunizza was.

<sup>3</sup> She carried on various amours.

<sup>4</sup> Folco da Marsiglia.

<sup>5</sup> i.e. his fame will last for an indefinitely long time.

<sup>6</sup> His good name.

<sup>7</sup> The inhabitants of the Marca Trivigiana.

<sup>8</sup> With their blood. The river of Vicenza is the Bacchiglione.

<sup>9</sup> They resisted the emperor Henry VII, but were defeated with great slaughter by Can Grande.

<sup>10</sup> At Treviso.

<sup>11</sup> Riccardo da Camino, who was assassinated in consequence of his adulteries.

treachery<sup>1</sup>, which will be disgraceful beyond any for which criminals have been imprisoned in Malta<sup>2</sup>. The vat which should contain the blood of Ferrara's sons must needs be exceeding ample, and weary would he be who should weigh it ounce by ounce; which blood this courteous priest will offer as a boon to prove his partisanship<sup>3</sup>; and such-like gifts will be in conformity with the conduct of his people. On high there are mirrors—ye call them 'Thrones'<sup>4</sup>—whereby God's judgements are clearly revealed to us, so that we approve these utterances.' With that she ceased, and showed me that she had turned to other thoughts by entering the circle where she was before.

Folco da  
Marsiglia.

The other glad spirit<sup>5</sup>, which was already known to me as an object of admiration, presented to me the appearance of a fine ruby smitten by the sun. In Heaven joy produces an access of brightness, even as on earth it produces a smile; while in Hell the outward semblance of the shades is darkened in proportion as the mind is sad. 'God sees all things, and thy sight is in Him, blessed spirit,' I said, 'so that no wish can be concealed from thee. Why then doth not thy voice, which in harmony with the songs of those saintly arduours that covered themselves with six wings<sup>6</sup> doth ever enrapture Heaven, grant satisfaction to my longings? If I could read thy thoughts as thou readest mine, I should not now be

<sup>1</sup> A bishop of Feltro surrendered to the Guelf governor of Ferrara a number of citizens of Ferrara of the Ghibelline faction, who had sought refuge with him; and they were put to death.

<sup>2</sup> Malta was the name of a prison within a castle.

<sup>3</sup> To prove himself a good partisan of the Guelfs.

<sup>4</sup> The third Order in dignity of the Intelligences.

<sup>5</sup> Folco da Marsiglia, who was a gay troubadour, but later in life became a monk, and was made bishop of Toulouse.

<sup>6</sup> The Seraphim; cp. Isa. vi. 2.

waiting for thee to question me.' 'The largest of the basins<sup>1</sup> wherein the water is outspread which issues from the ocean that surrounds the earth'—such were then his opening words—'extends so far against the sun's course between the contrasted coasts<sup>2</sup>, that it makes midday at the place where, looking from its starting-point, is its horizon. On the shore of that basin I was born, between the Ebro and the Macra, which in its brief course separates the Genoese from the Tuscans. Sunset and sunrise wellnigh correspond at Buggea and the city whence I came, by the blood of whose citizens erewhile the waters of its port were heated<sup>3</sup>. Folco I was called by those who knew my name, and this Heaven is influenced by me, as I was by it; for not more impassioned was Belus' daughter<sup>4</sup>, when she grieved at once Sichaeus and Creusa, than was I, so long as it beseeemed my hair; nor the maid of Rhodope<sup>5</sup>, who was beguiled by Demophoon; nor Alcides<sup>6</sup>, when Iole was enfolded in his heart. Yet here contrition is not felt, but we smile, not at the sin, for that recurs not to the mind, but at the Power whose providence ordained this. Here in contemplating the skill which perfects us we consider the greatness of the result, and we recognize the Good, for the sake of which the world below returns to that above.

<sup>1</sup> Folco begins by mentioning his birthplace; but instead of giving its name, Marseilles, he describes it periphrastically as a place on the shore of the Mediterranean, equidistant from the mouth of the Ebro in Spain and that of the Macra in Italy, and in the same longitude as the town of Buggea (now Bougie) in Africa.

<sup>2</sup> Those of Europe and Africa.

<sup>3</sup> The reference is to the carnage there, when Pompey's adherents were defeated by D. Brutus, who commanded Caesar's fleet.

<sup>4</sup> Dido, whose passion for Aeneas offended both Sichaeus, her former husband, and Creusa, Aeneas' former wife.

<sup>5</sup> Phyllis, who killed herself for love.

<sup>6</sup> Hercules.

Rahab. The  
avarice of  
the higher  
clergy.

‘But in order that the wishes which have arisen in thy heart in this sphere may be fully satisfied, I must yet further prolong my discourse. Thou desirest to learn who is in this light, which sparkles hard by me here, like a ray of sunshine in clear water. Know then that within it Rahab<sup>1</sup> enjoys perfect peace, and being associated with our order, contributes exceedingly to its glory. By this Heaven, in which the shadow of your world reaches its point<sup>2</sup>, first of all the souls in Christ’s triumph she was received on high. In sooth it was meet to leave her in one of the spheres of Heaven as a trophy of the mighty victory won by Christ’s two palms on the cross, seeing that she lent her aid to Joshua’s first triumph in the Holy Land, to which the Pope’s memory gives but little heed<sup>3</sup>. Thy city, which is an offspring of him<sup>4</sup>, who first turned his back on his Creator, and whose envy is the cause of so great woe, produces and disseminates the accursed flower<sup>5</sup>, which by converting the shepherds into wolves hath led both the sheep and the lambs astray. For the sake of this the Gospels and the great Doctors are neglected, and the Decretals<sup>6</sup> alone are diligently conned, as their margins testify. This occupies the minds of the Pope and the Cardinals; toward Nazareth, the place whither Gabriel winged his flight, their thoughts are not directed. But from this prostitution the Vatican and the other Holy Places of Rome, where lie the bones of the martyr host who followed Peter, will ere long be delivered.’

<sup>1</sup> See Josh. ii.

<sup>2</sup> The apex of the shadow of the earth was believed to be in the sphere of Venus.

<sup>3</sup> Boniface VIII took no thought for a Crusade for its recovery.

<sup>4</sup> The Devil.

<sup>5</sup> The lily on the golden florin of Florence.

<sup>6</sup> Books of Ecclesiastical Law, the study of which was profitable.



CANTO X. THE FOURTH HEAVEN,  
OF THE SUN

The primal and unspeakable Might, looking in the face of his Son with that Love which from both of them eternally proceeds, created in such order all things that revolve in mind or place<sup>1</sup>, that whoso gazes thereat cannot but participate in the fruition of Him. Lift then thine eyes, Reader, with me to the spheres on high, toward the point where the one motion intersects the other<sup>2</sup>; and there begin to contemplate with joy the art of that Master, who loves it so, as it exists within His mind, that His eye is never withdrawn therefrom. See how from that point branches off the oblique circle which bears the planets<sup>3</sup>, to minister to the needs of the world which invokes their aid; and if their path were not oblique, much influence in Heaven would be fruitless, and wellnigh every agency on earth below would fail. And if it deviated more or less from the right line<sup>4</sup>, much would be imperfect in the order of the world, both in the southern and the northern hemisphere. Now keep thy seat, Reader, and reflect on that whereof thou hast had a foretaste, if thou wouldst enjoy thy fill ere thou art weary. I have spread the board for thee; partake now for thyself, for the subject on which I have undertaken to write claims all my attention.

The delight of contemplating the system of the universe.

The highest of Nature's ministers<sup>5</sup>, who impresses on the world the influence of Heaven, and by his light measures time for us, being in contact with the point above mentioned,

The fourth Heaven, of the Sun; the Theologians.

<sup>1</sup> Whether in the spiritual or the material world.

<sup>2</sup> Where the equator and the ecliptic intersect one another; this takes place at the equinox.

<sup>3</sup> The zodiac.

<sup>4</sup> The equator.

<sup>5</sup> The sun.

was revolving in the spirals, wherein he shows his face earlier day by day : and I was in his company ; but of my ascent I was no more aware, than a man is conscious of a first thought before it comes. O Beatrice—she who is seen to increase in brilliancy so suddenly, that her change of appearance doth not reveal itself in time—how bright in herself she must have been ! As for the objects within the sun which now I entered, distinguishable not by colour but by access of light, how much soever I may call genius, art and practice to my aid, I would not say that they were ever imagined ; yet a man may believe in them, and long to see them. And 'tis no marvel if for such sublimity our imaginings are all too mean, for light superior to that of the sun eye never did behold. Such in this sphere was the fourth family<sup>1</sup> of the sublime Father, who evermore contents them by revealing to them his relation to the Spirit and the Son. And Beatrice began : ' Give thanks, give thanks to the Sun of the Angels, who to this visible sun hath by His grace exalted thee.'

Twelve  
spirits en-  
circle Dante  
and Bea-  
trice.

Never was heart of man so disposed to devotion, or so ready with full satisfaction to surrender itself to God, as I became on hearing those words ; and all my love was so absorbed in Him, that Beatrice was eclipsed in oblivion. She was not displeased thereby ; nay, so brightly did she smile, that by the splendour of her beaming eyes my mind, from being concentrated on one object, was diverted to the observation of many. I beheld how manifold lustres, vivid and dazzling, taking us for their centre formed a circle round us, by the sweetness of their voices surpassing the brightness of their looks. In such wise<sup>2</sup> ever and anon we see Latona's daughter girdled, when the air is so charged, that it retains

<sup>1</sup> The spirits of the Theologians.

<sup>2</sup> The halo round the moon is here described.

the thread which forms her zone <sup>1</sup>. In the court of Heaven whence I have returned many jewels there are so rare and beautiful, that they cannot be transported from their rightful seat; and in the number of these was the singing of those lights: whoso taketh not to himself wings to soar thither, will learn no more from thence than if he question the dumb.

After those burning suns, chanting these strains, had thrice revolved around us, like the stars in the neighbourhood of the steadfast poles, I likened them to ladies, who have not ceased from the dance, but pause in silence, listening till they catch the recommencement of the music. And from one of them <sup>2</sup> I heard the following words proceed: 'Since the beam of grace, whereby true love is kindled, and which through loving makes manifold increase, shines so brightly in thee, that it conducts thee upward by that stairway, which no one descends without mounting thither again <sup>3</sup>, he that should refuse thee the wine from his vial to quench thy thirst must be the victim of constraint, like water debarred from flowing downward to the sea. Thou wouldst fain know of what plants this garland is composed, which contemplates with joy on every side the fair Lady, who empowers thee to ascend to Heaven. I was one of the lambs of the holy flock <sup>4</sup> that Dominic leads by the path, where a man thrives well, if he gives not himself unto vanity. He who is nearest to me on my right was my brother and my master; he is Albert of Cologne <sup>5</sup>, and I am Thomas of Aquino. If thou wouldst

St. Thomas Aquinas; he names his companions.

<sup>1</sup> It retains the light, which is the material that forms the halo.

<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas (thirteenth century), the greatest theologian of the middle ages.

<sup>3</sup> This implies Dante's ultimate salvation.

<sup>4</sup> The Dominican Order.

<sup>5</sup> Albertus Magnus (thirteenth century), one of whose pupils Aquinas was.

have information concerning all the others, following my words pass thine eyes round over the blessed garland. The next radiance proceeds from the smile of Gratian, who benefited so the one and the other court<sup>1</sup>, that it causes joy in Paradise. The other, who by his side adorns our choir, was that Peter, who in the spirit of the poor widow made offering of his treasure to Holy Church<sup>2</sup>. The fifth light, which is the fairest in our number, breathes forth such love, that all the world below doth crave for news concerning it. Within it dwells the lofty mind<sup>3</sup>, which was the receptacle of wisdom so profound, that, if the Truth be true<sup>4</sup>, in grasp of thought his equal hath not arisen. Nigh to him thou seest the light of that taper<sup>5</sup>, who, when in the flesh on earth, possessed a profound insight into the nature of the angels and their ministry. In the tiny lustre which is next, the champion of the Christian ages<sup>6</sup> doth smile, of whose studied work Augustine availed himself. Now, if thy mind's eye, following my praises, passes from light to light, thou hast reached the eighth in thine inquiry. Within it rejoices in the sight of the Highest Good that saintly soul<sup>7</sup>, who to those that listen to him aright doth demonstrate the vanity of the world. The body whence he was expelled lies in Cieldauro below, and his soul came from

<sup>1</sup> Gratian (twelfth century) by his *Decretum* brought into agreement the secular and the ecclesiastical law.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Lombard (twelfth century) in the Preface to his *Sententiarum Libri* speaks of that work as a mite contributed to the Lord's treasury.

<sup>3</sup> Solomon.

<sup>4</sup> See 1 Kings iii. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Dionysius the Areopagite (Acts xvii. 34), who was (erroneously) supposed to have been the author of the *De Caelesti Hierarchia*, on which work the scheme of the Paradiso is based.

<sup>6</sup> Orosius (fifth century), the author of the *Historiae adversus Paganos*.

<sup>7</sup> Boëthius (sixth century), who wrote the *De Consolatione Philosophiae*.



martyrdom and exile to this peace. Beyond him behold all aflame the fervent spirits of Isidore<sup>1</sup>, of Bede<sup>2</sup>, and of Richard<sup>3</sup>, whose powers of contemplation were more than human. This one, from whom thy looks come back to me, is the lustre of a spirit so lofty, that in his grave meditations the approach of death seemed to him all too slow. This is the immortal light of Sigier<sup>4</sup>, who, when lecturing in the Street of Straw<sup>5</sup>, drew true conclusions which brought odium upon him.'

Then, like a clock, which summons us at the hour when the bride of God<sup>6</sup> arises to serenade her bridegroom that she may win his love, one part whereof pulls and impels the other, sounding 'tin, tin' with so sweet a note, that the devout spirit teems with love; so did I see the glorious circle move, and sing responsively with such harmony, such sweetness, as can only there be known where joy becomes eternal.

They circle round.

## CANTO XI. THE FOURTH HEAVEN, OF THE SUN

O insensate solicitude of mortals, how feeble are the arguments which make thee wing thy course downwards! One man was pursuing the law, one the precepts of medicine, one the priestly office; one was occupied in ruling by force or fraud, one in committing robbery, one in civil business; one

Contrast of heaven and earth.

<sup>1</sup> Bishop of Seville (seventh century), author of the *Origines*.

<sup>2</sup> Ecclesiastical historian of Britain (eighth century).

<sup>3</sup> Richard of St. Victor (twelfth century), author of the *De Contemplatione*.

<sup>4</sup> Philosopher and theologian (thirteenth century).

<sup>5</sup> The *Rue du Fouarre* at Paris, which was the centre of the famous University.

<sup>6</sup> The Church.

was wearying himself with the engrossing pleasures of the flesh, and one was given up to sloth; while I, exempt from such-like cares, in Beatrice's company received so glorious a welcome in Heaven above.

St. Thomas  
discourses  
on St. Francis.

So soon as they had returned, each to the point in the circle where he was before, they stopped as still as a candle on its stand. And I was ware that the spirit within that light which had erewhile addressed me, increasing in brightness, thus with a smile commenced: 'Even as my brilliancy proceeds from God's rays, so, when I regard the face of that eternal light, I read there the origin of thy thoughts. Thou art in doubt, and desirest that my words, where I said above: 'Where a man thrives well<sup>1</sup>,' and where I said: 'His equal hath not arisen<sup>2</sup>,' should be sifted anew in language so clear and so explicit, that they may be brought down to the level of thy perception; and here there is need of lucid explanation. The Providence which governs the world with wisdom so great that every created eye fails to fathom it, in order that the spouse of Him who to the sound of a loud cry espoused her with His precious blood, might follow the path which leads to her Beloved, confident in herself, and withal more faithful to Him, ordained in her behalf two Chieftains<sup>3</sup>, to serve as her guides on either hand. The one was wholly seraphic in his ardour; the other through wisdom was an effulgence of cherubic light on earth. I will tell of one of them<sup>4</sup>, because the praise of one, whichever be chosen,

<sup>1</sup> This was said of the Dominicans in the preceding Canto (l. 96).

<sup>2</sup> This was said of Solomon (l. 114).

<sup>3</sup> St. Francis and St. Domenic.

<sup>4</sup> St. Francis. St. Thomas, a Dominican, is here chosen to sing the praises of St. Francis, and in Canto XII St. Bonaventura, a Franciscan, celebrates St. Domenic, in order to exclude the idea of rivalry between the two Orders.

applies to both, seeing that their works tended to the same end.

‘Between the Tupino and the water which descends from the hill which Saint Ubaldo chose, there slopes the fertile declivity of a lofty mountain<sup>1</sup>, whence Perugia toward the Porta Sole feels cold and heat<sup>2</sup>, while behind it Nocera and Gualdo groan under a heavy yoke<sup>3</sup>. From this declivity where it falls most gently there dawned upon the world a sun, as from the Ganges at times this planet doth. Wherefore let him who speaks of that place not call it *Ascesi*<sup>4</sup>—that would express too little—but *Oriente*<sup>5</sup>, if he would give its rightful name. He was not as yet far distant from his rising, when he began to impart to the earth some comfort from his mighty influence; for while still a youth he incurred his father’s wrath for a lady’s<sup>6</sup> sake, to whom, even as to death, no one doth unlock the gate of pleasure: and before his spiritual court<sup>7</sup>, and in his father’s presence, he was joined in marriage with her; thereafter day by day he loved her more devotedly. She, after being bereaved of her first Spouse<sup>8</sup>, for more than eleven centuries in contempt and

Francis  
espouses  
Poverty.

<sup>1</sup> Assisi, St. Francis’ birthplace, is situated on the lower slopes of the Monte Subasio, with the Tupino flowing on its southern side, and the Chiascio on the western. The Chiascio rises near Gubbio, where St. Ubaldo had his hermitage.

<sup>2</sup> The Porta Sole is the eastern gate of Perugia; the temperature of the city, Dante says, is affected on that side by the neighbourhood of the Monte Subasio.

<sup>3</sup> These places were oppressed by the people of Perugia.

<sup>4</sup> ‘I rose’; this is a play on the name *Ascesi*, which was the popular form of Assisi in Dante’s time.

<sup>5</sup> ‘The East,’ a more dignified title.

<sup>6</sup> Poverty. He embraced a life of poverty.

<sup>7</sup> In the presence of the Bishop of Assisi he renounced his inheritance.

<sup>8</sup> Christ, who lived a life of poverty.

obscurity remained until his time without a suitor; nor availed it aught<sup>1</sup> that men heard, how that he who inspired the whole world with terror found her, in company with Amyclas, unmoved at the sound of his voice; nor did it avail that she was enduring and courageous, so that, where Mary remained at the foot of the cross, she was elevated on the cross with Christ. But, that I may not continue to speak too darkly, understand henceforth that these two lovers in my prolonged discourse are Francis and Poverty.

His life and  
his mission.

‘Their unanimity and the gladness of their looks brought it to pass that love and admiration and sympathetic regard produced thoughts of saintliness;—so much so that the venerable Bernardo first went barefoot, and hasted in pursuit of that perfect peace, and for all his haste he seemed to himself to linger. O unimagined riches, O fruitful blessing! Egidio goes barefoot, Silvestro goes barefoot in the bridegroom’s footsteps; so attractive is the bride. Then doth that father, that master go on his way with his lady, and with that family which now was girding on the humble cord; nor were his brows depressed with shame for that he was Pietro Bernardone’s son, and an object of unutterable contempt: but like a prince he declared to Innocent<sup>2</sup> his stern intention, and received from him the first seal of his monastic rule. After the sons of poverty multiplied under his lead whose wondrous life would more fitly<sup>3</sup> be celebrated in the glory of Heaven, the eternal Spirit speaking through Honorius

<sup>1</sup> Two instances of the moral grandeur of poverty, which nevertheless the world ignored, are here given—viz. the poor fisherman Amyclas, who showed no signs of fear when Caesar visited him (Lucan, v. 504 foll.), and Christ hanging naked on the cross.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Innocent III, who in 1214 approved the Order.

<sup>3</sup> More fitly than by unworthy Franciscan friars on earth.



placed a second crown on this archimandrite's holy purpose<sup>1</sup>; and when, in his thirst for martyrdom, he had preached in the proud Sultan's presence of Christ and the others his followers<sup>2</sup>; and finding that folk all unripe for conversion, that he might not tarry unavailingly, had returned to the harvest of the Italian crop; amid the rude rocks between the Tiber and the Arno he received from Christ his final seal<sup>3</sup>, which two years long his limbs did bear. When it seemed good to Him who ordained him to such beatitude to exalt him to the reward which by his self-abasement he had merited, to his brethren, as his rightful heirs, he confided his well-loved lady, and bade them love her faithfully; and from her bosom, when returning to his realm, the sublime spirit willed to pass away, and for his body he desired no other bier<sup>4</sup>.

‘Bethink thee now how great a man was he<sup>5</sup>, who was his worthy colleague in keeping the bark of Peter safe in the open sea by steering it aright! And this man was our patriarch; wherefore thou mayst be sure, that whoso follows him in accordance with his behests is freighted with good merchandise. But his flock have become so greedy of new fare, that they needs must stray through various mountain pastures; and the more his sheep wander afar from him, the smaller is the supply of milk which they bring back to the sheepfold. True it is that some among them through fear of harm keep close to the shepherd; but so few they are, that

Degeneration of the Dominican Order.

<sup>1</sup> Honorius III gave his approval in 1223.

<sup>2</sup> St. Francis visited Egypt in the hope of converting the Sultan.

<sup>3</sup> The *stigmata*, which he is said to have received on the Monte Alvernia in the Casentino.

<sup>4</sup> When he felt his end approaching, he desired that he should be conveyed to his chapel of the Portiuncula near Assisi, and should be laid on the ground; and there he died.

<sup>5</sup> St. Domenic.

it requires little cloth to make their cowls. Now, if my words are not vague, if thou hast listened attentively, if thou dost recall to mind what I have said, thy desire will in part be satisfied; for thou wilt recognize the tree from which the splinter is broken<sup>1</sup>, and withal the meaning of the wearer of the thong<sup>2</sup>, when he saith: "Where a man thrives well, if he gives not himself unto vanity."<sup>3</sup>

## CANTO XII. THE FOURTH HEAVEN, OF THE SUN

A second  
circle of  
spirits is  
formed.

So soon as the saintly flame took up its final word to give it utterance, the holy millstone began to revolve; and it had not completed its rotation ere it was encircled by another, which followed its lead in the dance and in the song—the song, which as far surpasses our Muses, our Sirens, in those sweet instruments, as the original beam outshines the reflected ray. As through a filmy cloud two arcs are described, corresponding in lines and colours, what time Juno commands her handmaid<sup>3</sup>, the outer arc proceeding from the inner, like the speech of that wandering sprite<sup>4</sup>, who was consumed by love as vapours are by the sun; and they cause mankind to augur, by reason of God's covenant with Noah, that the world will not henceforth be destroyed by a flood<sup>5</sup>: so did the two garlands of those everlasting roses revolve around us, and so to the innermost did the outermost correspond.

<sup>1</sup> i. e. the fact from which the deduction is made.

<sup>2</sup> The Dominican friar, St. Thomas.

<sup>3</sup> Iris, the rainbow.

<sup>4</sup> Echo, who wasted away through love of Narcissus.

<sup>5</sup> Gen. ix. 12-15.

When the dance and the sublime festivity alike of singing and of glistening, light sharing with light their joy and their affection, had ceased correspondingly in time and in accord—like the eyes, which perforce, following the volition that moves them, open and close together—from the heart of one of the newly arrived lights there proceeded a voice, which made me turn towards its station like the needle to the pole-star; and it thus began: ‘The love which beautifies me induces me to discourse concerning the other leader, for whose sake so great praise hath been accorded to mine own <sup>1</sup>. Fitting it is, that where one is introduced the other should be also, so that, as they fought in the same service, their glory in like manner should shine in common. Christ’s host, which cost so dear to arm afresh <sup>2</sup>, was moving slowly, without confidence, and in scant numbers behind its standard, when the Emperor who reigns eternally took thought for his wavering soldiery, out of pure grace, not for their merit’s sake; and, as hath been told, to succour his spouse he ordained two champions, through whose deeds and words the misguided folk bethought them of their ways. In that region <sup>3</sup> where sweet zephyr rises to open the fresh leaves wherewith Europe sees her attire renewed, not far withdrawn from the beating of the waves <sup>4</sup>, behind which, to repose from his long impetuous course, the sun at times hides him from mankind, lies Calahorra the fortunate, beneath the protection of the mighty shield, whereon the lion holds both the higher and

St. Bona-  
ventura  
extols  
St. Domenic.

<sup>1</sup> The praise which St. Thomas had accorded to St. Francis was intended to lead up to that of St. Domenic. The speaker, St. Bona-ventura, is a Franciscan.

<sup>2</sup> By the death of Christ which regenerated mankind.

<sup>3</sup> Spain.

<sup>4</sup> The Bay of Biscay is meant, where, from the point of view of Italy, the sun sets in summer, since it lies to the north-west of that country.

the lower place<sup>1</sup>. Within it was born the passionate lover of the Christian faith<sup>2</sup>, the saintly athlete, kindly to his friends, but to his foes severe; and so replete with living power, even from its creation, was his spirit, that while he was in his mother's womb it caused her to be prophetic<sup>3</sup>. After that the espousals were ratified between him and the Christian faith at the holy font, where they endowed each other with mutual safety, the lady who was his sponsor beheld in a dream the wondrous fruit which should proceed from him and from his followers<sup>4</sup>; and that he might be in title what he was in truth, there proceeded from these realms an inspiration, to assign him a name derived from His, who possessed him entirely<sup>5</sup>. Domenic he was called; and of him I speak as of the husbandman, whom for the benefit of his garden Christ elected. In sooth he seemed a messenger and a servant of Christ, for the first love which revealed itself in him, was for the counsel of perfection<sup>6</sup> which Christ gave. Many a time was he found by his nurse awake and kneeling in silence on the earth, as if he said: "For this I have come into the world." How rightly was his father called Felice<sup>7</sup>! How rightly was his mother called Giovanna<sup>8</sup>, if the wonted interpretation of the name be true! Not from worldly views, for which men nowadays weary themselves, after the example

<sup>1</sup> In one of the quarterings of the arms of Spain the Lion is above the Castle, in another beneath.

<sup>2</sup> St. Domenic was the champion of orthodoxy.

<sup>3</sup> She dreamed that she brought forth a dog, spotted black and white, which bore a lighted torch in its mouth.

<sup>4</sup> His godmother dreamed that he bore a star on his forehead, which illumined the world.

<sup>5</sup> *Dominicus*, derived from *Dominus*.

<sup>6</sup> The rule of poverty; cp. Matt. xix. 21.

<sup>8</sup> Favoured of God.

<sup>7</sup> Happy.



of him of Ostia <sup>1</sup> and of Taddeo <sup>2</sup>, but from love of the true manna, in a brief space he acquired so great learning, that he set himself to make inspection of the vineyard, which soon withers if the vine-dresser is wicked: and from the See, which aforesaid was more friendly to the righteous poor (not by its own fault, but by his who occupies it, who goes astray), he requested—not licence to dispense a fraction of a dole <sup>3</sup>, not the option of the first vacant benefice, not the tithes which belong rightly to God's poor—but liberty to combat with the sinful world for the seed <sup>4</sup>, whence sprang the four-and-twenty plants that encircle thee. Then in the strength at once of learning and of zeal, invested with his apostolic office he went forth, like a torrent bursting from a mountain source, and smote by his onset the undergrowth of heresy, most vigorously there where the resistance was most stubborn. Anon from him proceeded manifold rills <sup>5</sup> whereby the garden of the Church is watered, so that its shrubs display new life.

‘If such was one wheel of the car, wherein Holy Church defended herself, and was victorious in the field in her civil war, thou must recognize without fail the excellence of the other, of whom before my arrival Thomas spake so courteously. But the track which was left by the topmost part of its felly <sup>6</sup> is forsaken, so that where once the crust was, there is now the mould. His family, which at starting walked strictly in his footsteps, hath so changed its course, that it sets the point of the foot upon the heel <sup>7</sup>; and soon there will be evidence

Corruption  
of the  
Franciscans.

<sup>1</sup> A writer on the Decretals.

<sup>2</sup> A celebrated physician.

<sup>3</sup> i. e. to keep back the greater part of a charitable bequest.

<sup>4</sup> The Faith, by which the Theologians were nurtured.

<sup>5</sup> His followers.

<sup>6</sup> By this expression St. Francis himself is meant.

<sup>7</sup> i. e. walks in the opposite direction.

of the result of this bad husbandry, when the tares complain that they are excluded from the granary<sup>1</sup>. Doubtless I would affirm, that whoso examined our volume leaf by leaf would still find pages where he could read the words 'I am as I am wont'; but such would not come from Casale, nor from Acquasparta, the representatives of which so regard the Franciscan rule, that while the one shirks it, the other makes it more stringent<sup>2</sup>.

Other  
eminent  
theologians.

'I am the spirit of Bonaventura of Bagnoregio, who in the discharge of high offices ever gave temporal interests the second place. Illuminato and Augustino are here, who were among the first of the barefooted paupers, who by wearing the cord became the friends of God. Hugo of St. Victor<sup>3</sup> is here in their company, and Petrus Comestor<sup>4</sup> and Petrus Hispanus<sup>5</sup>, whose fame on earth twelve treatises proclaim; Nathan the prophet, and the metropolitan Chrysostom, with Anselm<sup>6</sup>, and that Donatus<sup>7</sup> who deigned to treat of the first of the sciences; Rabanus<sup>8</sup> is here, and by my side the Abbot Joachim of Calabria<sup>9</sup> shines, who was gifted with the spirit of prophecy. To celebrate this mighty champion of the Faith the courteous enthusiasm of Brother Thomas and his discreet address compelled me; and not me only, but this company withal.'

<sup>1</sup> This refers to a schism in the Franciscan Order.

<sup>2</sup> Matteo d'Acquasparta relaxed the rule; Ubaldino di Casale rigidly enforced it.

<sup>3</sup> A mystic theologian (twelfth century).

<sup>4</sup> So called as being a devourer of books (twelfth century).

<sup>5</sup> Author of the *Summulae Logicales* (thirteenth century); he became Pope John XXI.

<sup>6</sup> Author of the *Cur Deus homo*; Archbishop of Canterbury (twelfth century).

<sup>7</sup> Grammarian of the fourth century.

<sup>8</sup> Rabanus Maurus, theologian of the eighth and ninth centuries.

<sup>9</sup> Mystic theologian (twelfth century).

CANTO XIII. THE FOURTH HEAVEN,  
OF THE SUN

Let him imagine <sup>1</sup>, who would fully understand what I now saw (and while I speak let him retain the image firm as a rock), that fifteen stars, which quicken divers spaces of the sky with light so clear, that it overpowers all density of the atmosphere—let him imagine that the Wain, for which the vault of our heaven suffices both by night and day, so that no part of it disappears with the turning of its pole—let him imagine that the mouth of that horn, which commences at the point <sup>2</sup> of the axle round which the first sphere of the Heavens revolves—that these had formed themselves into two constellations in the sky, resembling that which Minos' daughter <sup>3</sup> formed, what time she felt the chill of death; and that the one was encircled by the other's rays, and that both revolved in such wise, that one moved forward and the other backward: and he will have an image of the true constellation, and of the twofold dance, which was moving round the point where I was—a faint image, for that as far surpasses our experience, as the motion of the Heaven which exceeds in speed the rest surpasses the movement of the Chiana <sup>4</sup>.

The circles  
of spirits  
sing and  
dance.

<sup>1</sup> In this passage the Poet compares the appearance of the twenty-four spirits of the Theologians, as they dance around him, to that of twenty-four of the brightest of the fixed stars, if grouped into two concentric circles. The twenty-four required stars are made up of fifteen taken from various parts of the sky, seven from the Great Bear (the Wain), and two from the Little Bear, which is here compared to a horn.

<sup>2</sup> The pole-star.

<sup>3</sup> Ariadne, from whose head at the time of her death Bacchus took the garland which she wore, and placed it among the stars as the Corona Borealis.

<sup>4</sup> The swiftest of the Heavens is the *Primum Mobile*; the Chiana is a very sluggish stream.

There the theme of their song was not Bacchus, nor Apollo, but three Persons in the divine nature, and that nature joined with the human in one person.

The ques-  
tion of  
Solomon's  
unrivalled  
wisdom.

The singing and the circling accomplished their measure, and those saintly lights gave heed to us, joyfully passing from one function to the other. Anon the silence amid the harmonious divinities was broken by that light, the spirit<sup>1</sup> within which had narrated to me the wondrous life of God's pauper<sup>2</sup>; and he said: 'Now that one ear of corn hath been threshed, now that the grain from it hath been garnered, kind love induces me to thresh the other<sup>3</sup>. Thou thinkest that into the breast, whence the rib was taken to form her fair cheek, whose taste costs all the world so dear; and into that breast, which, when transfix'd by the spear, made so full satisfaction for all sins, past and future, that it outweighs in the scale the transgressions of all mankind; all the light which human nature may possess was infused by that Power which created both of them: and therefore thou art surprised by what I said above, when I declared that the blessed spirit enclosed within the fifth light had no equal. Now open thine eyes to the answer which I give thee, and thou wilt see that thy thoughts and my words correspond as exactly in the statement of the truth as do the radii of a circle to one another.

'All things<sup>4</sup>, be they incorruptible or corruptible, are

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas.

<sup>2</sup> St. Francis.

<sup>3</sup> The question which St. Thomas proceeds to discuss is that arising from the statement that Solomon had no equal in wisdom. It has occurred to Dante's mind that Adam and Christ ought to be preferred before him in that respect. St. Thomas, while admitting this, explains that the wisdom which was spoken of in Solomon's case was practical wisdom, and with this qualification the statement is true.

<sup>4</sup> The argument is, that only what is created immediately by God is



naught else than a bright ray emanating from our Master's thought, which is generated by His love; for that living Light, which proceeds in such wise from its Source of light, that it cannot but be in Unity both with Him and with the Love which forms with them a Trinity, out of its good will focuses its rays, as in a mirror, in nine subsistences<sup>1</sup>, itself remaining eternally one. From these its rays pass downward to their last stage of working, descending so far through successive phases of action, that at last they produce but perishable results; and these I understand to be things generated, such as, either with or without seed, the Heavens by their movement create. Both the matter which forms these things and the influence which guides them are variable; and therefore afterward the wax which hath been stamped by the divine idea shows varying degrees of brilliancy: hence it comes to pass that trees of the same species produce fruits of different quality, and that ye are born with differences of character. If the wax were moulded in perfection, and the Heavens exercised their influence completely, the brightness derived from the seal would appear in full; but Nature ever supplies this in diminished measure, thus resembling in her work the artist who hath experience in his art, but an unsteady hand. Yet, if the fervent Love disposes and seals the clear Vision of the primal Power<sup>2</sup>, in that case the greatest possible perfection is the result. Thus once the "dust of the ground" was made worthy to form a living being<sup>3</sup> in every respect perfect; thus it was that the Virgin conceived a Child.

The superiority of Adam and Christ.

perfect, and as Adam and Christ in His human nature were the only men so created, their wisdom must have been superior to that of all other men, including Solomon.

<sup>1</sup> The nine Intelligences, which preside over the nine Heavens.

<sup>2</sup> i. e. if all the Persons of the Trinity combine to operate immediately.

<sup>3</sup> Adam.

Wherefore I approve of thy opinion, that human nature never hath been, and never will be, what it was in those two persons.

Solomon's  
was practical  
wisdom.

‘Now, if I continued my speech no farther, “How then was he of whom thou spakest without an equal?” is what thou wouldst begin to say. But in order that what is obscure may become fully clear, bethink thee who he was, and what was the cause which prompted his request, when it was said to him: “Ask <sup>1</sup>.” My speech hath not been so dark, that thou shouldst fail to see clearly that he was a king, who asked for wisdom in order that he might be a competent king;—not that he might know <sup>2</sup> the number of the Intelligences who move the spheres on high, or whether from a necessary and a contingent premiss the conclusion may be necessary; not whether we must grant that motion had a beginning, or whether it is possible to inscribe in a semicircle a triangle which should not have a right angle. Hence, if thou heedest this and what I said before, that unrivalled insight on which the shaft of mine intention strikes is kingly prudence. And, if thou regardest aright the expression “Hath arisen <sup>3</sup>,” thou wilt see that it refers to kings alone, who are many in number, but the good are rare. Accept my saying with this limitation, and it is reconcilable with thy view concerning the first father and Him who is our joy <sup>4</sup>.

The danger  
of hasty  
judgements.

‘Further, let this be ever a clog to thy steps, to cause thee to move slowly, like a weary man, towards either affirmation or negation, where thy view is not clear; for whoso asserts or denies without qualification is very low down in the number

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings iii. 5, ‘God said, Ask what I shall give thee.’

<sup>2</sup> These which follow are speculative questions.

<sup>3</sup> In the sense of ‘Rose above others.’

<sup>4</sup> Concerning Adam and Christ.

of the foolish, as much in the one as in the other case ; seeing that it happens, that a hastily formed opinion full often inclines to the wrong side, and thereafter the judgement is hampered by personal feeling. He that investigates truth without due equipment, not only gains nothing by loosing his moorings, but returns in worse plight than when he started : and of this the world hath clear evidence in Parmenides, Melissus, Brissus and others <sup>1</sup>, who went they knew not whither. The same was the case with Sabellius and Arius <sup>2</sup>, and those fools, who in their treatment of the Scriptures were like a sword-blade, which distorts the natural countenance <sup>3</sup>. Let not the folk be as yet too confident in their judgements, like one who sets a value on the corn in the field ere it be ripe ; for I have seen the brier, after wearing a stiff and rude aspect throughout the spring, anon bear the rose on its summit ; and erewhile I saw a vessel, which traversed the sea in a straight and swift course throughout, sink at last at the harbour's mouth. Let not Madam Bertha or Sir Martin <sup>4</sup> think, when they see one man steal and another make offerings, that they behold their lives even as God's judgement sees them, for the one may rise and the other fall.'

## CANTO XIV. THE FOURTH AND FIFTH HEAVENS

From the centre to the circumference, and from the cir- The nature  
cumference to the centre, water moves in a round bowl, of man's  
according as it is smitten within or without. This which glorified  
I say dropped of a sudden into my mind, so soon as the body.

<sup>1</sup> Sophistical philosophers.

<sup>2</sup> Heretics.

<sup>3</sup> i. e. when the face is reflected in it.

<sup>4</sup> Ordinary persons.

glorious spirit of Thomas ceased from speaking, by reason of the resemblance <sup>1</sup> which arose between his utterance and that of Beatrice, who after him was pleased to commence as follows. 'This one hath need, though neither by his voice nor as yet in thought doth he declare it to you, to sound the depths of another verity. Tell him whether the light which emanates from your substance will abide with you eternally as it is at present; and if it will, tell him how it can be, after ye have once more become visible, that the sight thereof should not harm you.' As those who are dancing in a round, when impelled and drawn by an access of delight, all together uplift their voices and enliven their gestures; so at that earnest and pious prayer did the saintly circles display fresh joy in their rotatory movement and their wondrous harmony. He that laments because we must die here as the condition of living in the world above, hath not seen there the refreshment of the eternal rain.

Solomon  
discourses  
upon it.

That one and two and three that lives for aye, and reigns evermore in three and two and one, incomprehensible and comprehending all things, had thrice been sung <sup>2</sup> by each of those spirits with such melody as for the highest merit would be a full recompense, when within the divinest light of the lesser ring I heard a modest voice <sup>3</sup> reply, haply like that of the Angel addressing Mary: 'So long as the festival of Paradise shall last, our love will radiate around us such a vesture. Its brightness will correspond to our fervour, the fervour to our power of sight, and that is in proportion to the grace it hath in addition to its natural gifts. When the

<sup>1</sup> The point illustrated by the comparison is the movement of the voices in opposite directions.

<sup>2</sup> The subject of their song is the Trinity in Unity.

<sup>3</sup> The voice of Solomon.



glorious saintly flesh hath been resumed, our person will be more acceptable because of its completeness. By this the free gift of light which the Highest Good bestows—light which empowers us to behold Him—will be increased; and thus our vision of Him must increase, and therewith the fervour which is kindled by it, and the brightness withal that proceeds therefrom. But, as is the case with a live coal which sends forth flame, yet by the intensity of its brightness so far overpowers it, that it can be still distinctly seen, so this effulgence, which now envelops us, will be surpassed in the clearness of its aspect by the flesh, which now the earth doth ever hide; nor will that keen light have power to fatigue us, for the organs of the body will avail for every object that can give us pleasure.' So ready on the instant to say 'Amen' did either choir appear to me, that they clearly manifested their desire to regain their dead bodies; nor only for themselves, maybe, but for their mothers, their fathers, and the others whom they loved ere they became eternal flames.

And lo, around them a lustre of equal brilliancy arose in addition to what was there, like the horizon when it brightens. Then, as at the approach of eve new lights begin to appear in the sky, so that the sight seems real, and yet unreal, methought I began to see new spirits there, who formed a ring without the other two circles. O veritable scintillation of the Holy Spirit, how in a moment did it display its brilliancy to mine eyes, which were overpowered and endured it not! But Beatrice presented herself to me so fair and smiling, that this I must leave in the number of those sights which have passed out of my mind. From it mine eyes regained the power to lift themselves afresh, and I found myself alone with my Lady translated to higher blessedness<sup>1</sup>.

A third ring  
of spirits is  
formed.

<sup>1</sup> They now enter the fifth Heaven, where are the Warrior Saints and Martyrs.

The fifth  
Heaven, of  
Mars; the  
figure of the  
Cross.

Well was I aware that I had risen aloft, by reason of the planet's burning smile, which, methought, was ruddier than its wont. With a full heart, and in that language which is common to all mankind<sup>1</sup>, I made my holocaust to God, in measure corresponding to the newly conferred boon; and the ardour of that sacrifice had not yet been quenched within my breast, when I perceived that this offering of mine was found acceptable and welcome; for within two rays splendours<sup>2</sup> so luminous and so ruddy appeared to me, that I exclaimed: 'O Sun, who dost adorn them thus!' As, variegated by greater and lesser lights, the galaxy gleams so white from pole to pole, that it perplexes minds exceeding wise; with stars so grouped did those two rays form in the depths of Mars the venerable sign, which quadrants joining in a circle make. Here doth my memory overtax my powers, for from that cross Christ beamed forth so radiant, that I can find naught adequate to illustrate it: but he who takes up his cross and follows Christ will hereafter pardon me for my omission, when he sees Christ blaze forth in the brightness of that cross. From one arm of the cross to the other, and from the summit to the foot, lights were moving, which sparkled keenly as they met and as they passed. In such wise here on earth motes of all sizes are seen to move—level and aslant, swiftly and slowly, changing their appearance—within a ray of light, wherewith at times the shade is streaked, which to ward off the sun men contrive for themselves with cunning art. And as a violin or harp, tuned in harmony with many strings, makes a sweet tinkling in his ears who hath not caught the tune; so from the lights which there appeared to me there

<sup>1</sup> The language of the heart, not expressed in words.

<sup>2</sup> These are the spirits grouped in two luminous stripes, which are placed transversely to one another so as to form a cross.

gathered along the cross a melody, whereby I was enraptured without comprehending the hymn. Right well I recognized that it was a burst of sublime praise, seeing that the words 'Arise and conquer'<sup>1</sup> reached me, like one who, though hearing, understands not: by this I was so enamoured, that till then no other thing had captivated me with bonds so sweet. Maybe, my words seem overbold, in that I depreciate the charm of those fair eyes, in gazing on which my desire finds repose. But he who bethinks him that the quickening seals of every form of beauty<sup>2</sup> are more active in proportion as they are higher, and that in that sphere I had not turned me toward those eyes, may excuse me for that whereof I accuse myself in order to exculpate myself, and may see that I speak the truth, because in what I say the holy joy is not ignored, since by rising upward it is intensified<sup>3</sup>.

## CANTO XV. THE FIFTH HEAVEN, OF MARS

Benevolence of will, into which the love which inspires  
 righteous feelings ever resolves itself, as doth cupidity into  
 an unjust will, imposed silence on that sweet lyre, and caused  
 those saintly chords, which are pulled or slackened by  
 Heaven's right hand, to cease their strains. How should  
 those spirits fail to listen to pious prayers, when, to en-  
 courage me to solicit them, they with one accord were  
 silent? 'Tis just that he, who through his love of things

Warrior  
 Saints and  
 Martyrs.

<sup>1</sup> With these words the warrior spirits celebrate Christ as conqueror.

<sup>2</sup> The planetary spheres.

<sup>3</sup> Dante means that Beatrice's eyes still surpassed every other source of delight, but that he had not seen them since their beauty was enhanced by entering this higher sphere.

transitory deprives him for evermore of that love, should lament eternally.

A bright  
spirit ap-  
proaches.

As across a serene and spotless sky ever and anon there shoots a sudden fire, causing the eyes which were before at rest to move, and seems as it were a star that shifts its site, save that in the quarter whence it flashes none is lost, and itself abides not long; so from the arm of that cross which stretches to the right, even to its foot there sped a star from forth the constellation which glitters there; nor did the jewel pass the limits of its ribbon, nay, it ran across the brilliant stripe, resembling a flame seen through alabaster. With like affection, if we may trust our prince of poets<sup>1</sup>, did Anchises' shade reach out towards his son when he met him in Elysium.

Caccia-  
guida,  
Dante's  
ancestor,  
addresses  
him.

'O mine own offspring<sup>2</sup>! O grace of God shed over thee! to whom, as to thee, hath the gate of Heaven ever been twice opened<sup>3</sup>?' So spake that light; whereupon I gave heed to him. Anon I turned my face toward my Lady, and found cause for wonderment on either hand; for within her eyes there appeared a smile so glowing, that methought I had fathomed with mine own the depths of my grace and of my blessedness. Then with gladness in his speech and looks did the spirit follow up his initial words with themes of so deep meaning that I comprehended them not: nor was it from choice that he concealed his meaning from me, but of necessity, because his thought rose above the mark of mortal men. And when the impulse of his burning love was so far moderated, that his speech was lowered to the level of our intellect, the first thing that I understood was this: 'Blessed art Thou, O Three in One, who toward

<sup>1</sup> Virgil: cp. *Aen.* vi. 684-6.

<sup>2</sup> The speaker is Cacciaguida, Dante's great-great-grandfather.

<sup>3</sup> 'Twice,' because he would be admitted to Heaven again after death.



mine offspring art so gracious.' Then he continued: 'A pleasing desire of long standing, contracted by reading in the mighty tome <sup>1</sup>, wherein no entry, whether fair or foul, is ever erased, thou hast appeased in me, my son, robed as I am in this light wherein I speak to thee, thanks to her, who hath invested thee with wings for thy lofty flight. Thou deemest that thy thought passes to me from Him who is the first Existence, even as from the unit, when once it is known, other numbers radiate <sup>2</sup>: and therefore thou askest me not who I am, or wherefore I appear to thee more joyous than any other in this glad company. Thou deemest rightly; for all, whether great or small, in this our life look into that mirror, wherein thy thought, ere it is formed, is manifested. But in order that the sacred love wherein I watch, perpetually gazing, and which causes me to thirst with sweet desire, may have fuller satisfaction, let thy voice with confidence and strength and gladness proclaim the wish, proclaim the longing, whereto my reply already is determined.'

I turned me toward Beatrice, and ere I spake she heard me, and vouchsafed a token, which caused the wings of my desire to grow. Anon I thus began: 'From what time the first Equality was revealed to you <sup>3</sup>, feeling and power of thought were equally balanced in each one of you, because the Sun, who enlightened and kindled you by His heat and His light, is so equal in His attributes that all comparisons are nothing worth. But in mortal men, for a reason which ye clearly see, the wish and the means to give effect to that wish are developed in different degrees. Hence I who am a

Dante's  
reply.

<sup>1</sup> The book of God's foreknowledge.

<sup>2</sup> Are calculated from it as from a starting-point.

<sup>3</sup> From the time of your entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, when God, in whom all attributes equally exist, was revealed to you.

mortal am aware of this disparity in my powers, and therefore by my heart alone <sup>1</sup> I express my gratitude for thy paternal welcome. Yet I beseech thee, O living topaz, that dost as a gem adorn this precious jewellery <sup>2</sup>, to satisfy my longing with thy name.'

The life of  
Florence in  
the olden  
time.

'My leaf, in whom I took pleasure even while I waited for thee, I was thy root': such were his opening words, as he replied to me. Anon he said: 'He from whom thy family takes its name <sup>3</sup>, and who for a hundred years and more hath been moving round the first Cornice of the Mountain <sup>4</sup>, was my son and thy great-grandfather: rightly shouldst thou shorten by thy good offices <sup>5</sup> the long term of his weariness. Florence then within her ancient enclosure, from which she still takes both tierce and nones <sup>6</sup>, abode in peace, sober and chaste. No fine chains had she, no coronets, no gaily sandalled ladies, no belts that attracted the eye more than the figure did. Not yet did the daughter at her birth inspire her father with fear, for the marriageable age and the dowry transgressed not the due limit on either hand. Florence had no childless families; not yet had Sardanapalus <sup>7</sup> entered there to show what chambering may do. Not yet by your Uccellatoio was Montemalo <sup>8</sup> surpassed, which, as it was out-

<sup>1</sup> By feeling without words. Dante here excuses himself for being unable to thank Cacciaguida aright.

<sup>2</sup> The cross.

<sup>3</sup> Cacciaguida's son, Aldighiero, from whom the Alighieri obtained their name.

<sup>4</sup> The Cornice where pride was expiated.

<sup>5</sup> By intercessions in his behalf.

<sup>6</sup> The reference is to the chimes of the Badia, which stood just within the ancient walls.

<sup>7</sup> The typical representative of effeminacy and luxury.

<sup>8</sup> Uccellatoio and Montemalo (now Monte Mario) were the hills from which respectively Florence and Rome were seen by one coming from the north. The points of view are here taken to stand for the cities themselves.

rivalled in its rise, will be so likewise in its fall. I saw Bellincion Berti<sup>1</sup> walk with leather belt and clasp of bone, and his lady come from her mirror without paint on her cheeks; and I saw the heads of the Nerli and the Vecchietti<sup>2</sup> content with undraped leathern suits, and their ladies content with the spindle and the flax on the distaff. O fortunate dames! they were sure, one and all, of their burial-place; nor for the sake of France was any yet deserted in her bed<sup>3</sup>. One kept careful watch beside the cradle, and in her lullaby used the language in which fathers and mothers first find delight; another, while drawing its tresses from off the distaff, recounted to her household stories of the Trojans, of Fiesole, and of Rome. In those days a Cianghella or a Lapo Salterello<sup>4</sup> would have been deemed as great a portent as Cincinnatus and Cornelia would be now. To a citizen life so serene, so seemly, to so trustworthy a community, to so sweet an abode Mary consigned me, when invoked with loud cries<sup>5</sup>; and in your ancient baptistery I was at once baptized and named Cacciaguida. Moronto and Eliseo were my brothers; from the valley of the Po my wife came to me, and thence arose the surname thou bearest<sup>6</sup>. Anon I followed the emperor Conrad<sup>7</sup>, who made me one of his belted knights, so greatly by my good service did I win his favour. In his train I proceeded against that unrighteous rule<sup>8</sup>, whose followers, through the fault of the shepherds

<sup>1</sup> A fine specimen of the worthy citizens.

<sup>2</sup> Two noble Florentine families.

<sup>3</sup> They were not forced to emigrate, nor did their husbands leave them, and settle in France as traders.

<sup>4</sup> Two dissipated Florentines.

<sup>5</sup> i.e. in the pangs of childbirth.

<sup>6</sup> Alighieri.

<sup>7</sup> Conrad III of Suabia, who was one of the leaders of the Second Crusade.

<sup>8</sup> The Mahometan religion.

of the Church, usurp your just rights. There by that base folk was I freed from the trammels of the delusive world, the love whereof debases many a soul, and from my martyrdom I came to this repose.'

## CANTO XVI. THE FIFTH HEAVEN, OF MARS

Dante's  
pride of  
birth.

Alas for our noble birth, unworthy possession! never henceforth shall I wonder, if here on earth, where our aspirations are so faint, thou causest men to glory in thee, seeing that in that realm where desires are not misdirected—in Heaven, I mean—I gloried therein. In sooth thou art a mantle that quickly shrinks, so that, unless thou art added to day by day, time goes about thee with his shears<sup>1</sup>. My speech recommenced with 'You<sup>2</sup>,' the form of address that Rome first permitted, and which her sons less carefully maintain. Whereat Beatrice, who had withdrawn a brief space, by her smile resembled that lady<sup>3</sup>, who coughed at Guinevere's first recorded transgression. I thus began: 'You are my father; you bestow on me full confidence in speaking; you exalt me so that I rise above myself. By so many rills my mind is filled with gladness, that it takes pleasure in itself at being able uninjured to contain so much

<sup>1</sup> i. e. thou art constantly being diminished by time.

<sup>2</sup> The plural of dignity. This use was introduced at a late period of the Roman empire, and was being neglected by the Romans of Dante's time.

<sup>3</sup> The Lady of Malchault, who coughed when she noticed the familiarity between Guinevere and Lancelot on the occasion of their first meeting. Similarly Beatrice by her smile intimated that she noticed Dante's pride in his ancestor.



joy. Tell me then, dear forefather mine, who were your ancestors, and what the years which were registered in your boyhood<sup>1</sup>. Tell me concerning the sheepfold of St. John, what was then its size<sup>2</sup>, and who were the folk within it worthy of the highest dignities.<sup>3</sup>

As, when the winds breathe, coal quickens into flame, so Caccia-  
at my blandishments did I see that light shine brighter; and guida's date  
as it became more beautiful to mine eyes, so too in tones and ances-  
more sweet and gentle, but not with the modern mode of tors; the  
speech we use, it said to me: 'From the day when "Ave" population  
was spoken<sup>3</sup> to the date of the birth-pangs whereby my of Florence.  
mother, who is now a saint, was delivered of me with whom  
she was pregnant, this planet came five hundred and eighty  
times to the Lion, its proper sign, to renew its fires beneath  
his paw<sup>4</sup>. My ancestors and I were born in the place<sup>5</sup>  
where the last ward is first reached by him who runs in your  
annual sports. Of my progenitors suffice it us to hear this  
much; who they were, and whence they came hither, it  
beseems me more to leave unspoken than to tell. The full  
number of those who were then capable of bearing arms in  
that city between Mars and the Baptist<sup>6</sup>, were a fifth part  
of those who live there now. But the body of the citizens,  
which now is mixed with immigrants from Campi, from  
Certaldo, and from Figline, was seen to be pure down to the  
lowest artisan. Ah, how far better would it be, that the

<sup>1</sup> i.e. what was about your date.

<sup>2</sup> What was the population of Florence at that time.

<sup>3</sup> From the Annunciation; in other words, from the Christian era.

<sup>4</sup> The date which is here intended for Cacciaguida's birth is about 1090.

<sup>5</sup> The Mercato Vecchio.

<sup>6</sup> Between the Ponte Vecchio, where stood the statue of Mars, and the church of St. John the Baptist, which is now the Baptistry.

families of whom I speak should be your neighbours, and that your confines should be at Galluzzo and Trespiano<sup>1</sup>, than that ye should have them in your midst, and should endure the offensiveness of the churl of Aguglione<sup>2</sup>, and of him of Signa, who even now hath a keen eye for jobbery! If that class who are the most degenerate of mankind had not acted like a stepmother to Caesar<sup>3</sup>, but had been benevolent, as a mother to her son, some who have become Florentines and discount and trade, would have returned to Simifonti, where their grandfathers were wont to go a-begging. Montemurlo would still be in the possession of the Conti Guidi; the Cerchi would be in the parish of Acone, and haply the Buondelmonti in the valley of the Greve. Ever hath the intermingling of persons been the source of woe to cities, as superfluity of food is to the human frame. And the blind bull meets with a more sudden fall than a blind lamb, and ofttimes a single sword inflicts more and sharper wounds than five swords do<sup>4</sup>. Bethink thee how Luni and Urbisaglia have passed away, and how in their wake Chiusi and Sinigaglia are disappearing, and it will seem no hard or strange thing to thine ears to be told that families die out, seeing that cities come to an end. All earthly things perish as yourselves do; but in some, which exist for long, the downfall is not seen, and withal men's lives are brief. And

<sup>1</sup> Two villages within a few miles of Florence.

<sup>2</sup> Baldo d'Aguglione, who took part in the decree of perpetual banishment against Dante in 1311.

<sup>3</sup> The meaning of this passage is, that, if the clergy had not set themselves to oppose the Imperial power, there would not have been those feuds in the small Italian towns, which ruined them, and caused their inhabitants to take refuge in Florence, where they became traders.

<sup>4</sup> Increase of size is a source of danger, and increase of numbers is an impediment to action.

as by its revolution the Heaven of the moon doth unceasingly conceal and reveal the sea-shores<sup>1</sup>, so doth fortune deal with Florence; wherefore that which I shall tell thee of the eminent Florentines whose fame time hath obscured need appear no marvel.

‘I saw the Ughi, I saw the Catellini, the Filippi, the Greci, the Ormanni and the Alberichi already in their decline, illustrious citizens; I saw too, grand in estate no less than ancient lineage, the head of the Sannella, and him of the Arca family, and the Soldanieri, the Ardinghi, and the Bostichi. Over the gate<sup>2</sup>, which at the present time is laden with recent treachery of so great burden, that ere long it will cause the loss of the vessel, were the Ravignani, from whom Count Guido is descended, and whoso hath subsequently taken the great Bellincione’s name. He of the La Pressa family already understood the art of ruling, and Galigaio already had the hilt and the pommel designed in gold upon his house. Already was the column vair<sup>3</sup> in honour, with the Sacchetti, the Giuochi, the Fifanti, the Barucci, and the Galli, and they who blush by reason of the bushel<sup>4</sup>. The stock whence the Calpucci sprang was already eminent, and the Sizii and the Arrigucci were already summoned to the curule chairs. In how high estate did I see those who are ruined by their pride! and the golden balls<sup>5</sup> embellished Florence in all their mighty deeds. Such

The leading families in his day.

<sup>1</sup> i. e. causes the ebb and flow of the tide.

<sup>2</sup> The Porta San Piero, where now the Cerchi lived, who were the heads of the White Guelfs.

<sup>3</sup> A column decorated with spotted fur, which the Pigli bore on their shield.

<sup>4</sup> The Chiamamontesi, one of whose members had falsified the bushel measure.

<sup>5</sup> These were on the arms of the Lamberti.

too was the conduct of the ancestors of those<sup>1</sup>, who, as often as your bishopric is vacant, enrich them by abiding in their consistory. That overbearing race<sup>2</sup>, which pursues like a dragon one who flies, and toward one who shows his teeth, or maybe his purse, is as peaceful as a lamb, was already rising, though its numbers were small, so that Ubertin Donato was ill-pleased by his father-in-law afterward making him their relation. Already from Fiesole Caponsacco had come down to the market-place, and Giuda and Infangato were good citizens. What I now shall mention, though incredible, is true; the inner circle was entered by a gate, which took its name from the Peruzzi<sup>3</sup>. Every one who shares the honour of bearing the fair ensign of the Great Baron<sup>4</sup>, whose name and whose honour the festival of Thomas renews, derived from him his knighthood and his privileges, albeit the man who surrounds it with a border<sup>5</sup>, at the present time espouses the popular side. Already the Gualterotti and Importuni were in existence; and had they lacked new neighbours, the Borgo would have remained more tranquil. The house which was the source of your distress<sup>6</sup> by reason of the just indignation which hath done you to death, and brought to an end the gladness of your life, was honoured both in itself and its connexions. O Buondelmonte,

<sup>1</sup> Two families, who were custodians of the bishopric of Florence, and, when a vacancy occurred, appropriated the revenues until a successor was appointed.

<sup>2</sup> The Adimari.

<sup>3</sup> This seemed strange, because they were now forgotten.

<sup>4</sup> The Marquis Hugo of Brandenburg, viceroy of the emperor Otho III in Tuscany; he died on St. Thomas's day.

<sup>5</sup> Giano della Bella. His arms were the same as Hugo's with the addition of a golden border.

<sup>6</sup> The Amidei, whose quarrel with the Buondelmonti was regarded as the origin of the Guelph and Ghibelline factions in Florence.



in what an evil hour didst thou at another's instigation flee thy nuptials with that house <sup>1</sup>! Many who are sad would be joyful, had God surrendered thee to the Ema, when first thou camest to the city <sup>2</sup>. But it was suitable that to that mutilated stone <sup>3</sup> which guards the bridge Florence should offer a victim in the last days of her peace. With these families and others their associates I saw Florence enjoying such calm repose, that she had no cause to mourn. With these families I saw her people so glorious and so upright, that the lily <sup>4</sup> was never reversed on the lance, nor made vermilion by party feuds.<sup>5</sup>

## CANTO XVII. THE FIFTH HEAVEN, OF MARS

As was his mood, who still makes fathers chary toward their sons <sup>5</sup>, when he came to Clymene to certify himself concerning that which he had heard to his disparagement <sup>6</sup>; such was mine, and such was it perceived to be, both by Beatrice, and by the saintly lustre, who ere this for my sake had changed his station. Wherefore my Lady said to me :

<sup>1</sup> Young Buondelmonte, who was engaged to a lady of the Amidei, was persuaded by Gualdrata Donati to desert her and to marry her daughter.

<sup>2</sup> The first Buondelmonte who came to Florence had to cross that river; Cacciaguida expresses the wish that he (and so hypothetically his descendant) had been drowned on that occasion.

<sup>3</sup> The broken statue of Mars; cp. *Inf.* xiii. 143 foll.

<sup>4</sup> The emblem on the banner of Florence.

<sup>5</sup> Phaëthon is meant, who persuaded his father, the Sun, to allow him to drive his chariot, the results of which proceeding were disastrous.

<sup>6</sup> When Epaphus denied that Phaëthon was the son of Phoebus, he questioned his mother Clymene on this subject.

‘Give vent to thy fervent desire, so that it may come forth with a clear impression of the stamp within; not that by thy words our knowledge may be increased, but that thou mayst accustom thyself to declare thy thirst, so that one may mingle the cup for thee.’ ‘Dear seed-plot whence I sprang, who art so exalted that, even as earthly minds perceive that in a triangle two obtuse angles are inadmissible, so thou dost see contingent things ere they actually happen, thine eyes being fixed on the point<sup>1</sup> to which all times are present; while I was in Virgil’s company, ascending the Mountain which heals men’s souls, and going down into the world of the dead, words of grave import were spoken to me concerning the future of my life, albeit I feel myself in truth four-square to meet the strokes of fate. Wherefore I would fain hear what fortune awaits me, for the arrow that is foreseen comes with less sudden blow.’ Thus spake I to that same light which had before addressed me, and in accordance with Beatrice’s wishes my desire was confessed.

Cacciaguida  
prophesies  
his expulsion  
from  
Florence.

Nor was it with ambiguous speech, in which the foolish folk in days of yore ensnared themselves, ere the Lamb of God who taketh away sin was slain, but in clear words and definite language, that that paternal love replied, concealed the while, and revealing himself by his own smile. ‘Contingent events, which are confined to the compass of your material world, are all depicted in the face of God; yet are they not thereby rendered necessary, any more than the motion of a ship downstream is determined by the eye wherein it is reflected. From thence, even as from an instrument sweet harmony falls on the ear, the days that are in store for thee dawn on my view. In like manner as Hippolytus was driven from Athens by his merciless and perfidious stepmother<sup>2</sup>, thou

<sup>1</sup> The face of God.

<sup>2</sup> By the false accusations of Phædra.

art fated to be driven from Florence. This is what is wished, this is what is sought, and soon will be accomplished, by him who is devising it in that place where Christ is ever bought and sold<sup>1</sup>. By the popular cry, as usual, the blame will be attributed to the wronged party; but the vengeance that shall follow will testify whose unerring judgement it is which dispenses it. Thou wilt leave behind every object of thy dearest love, and this is the shaft which the bow of exile doth first discharge. Thou wilt learn by experience how bitter is the taste of another's bread, and how hard a path it is to ascend and descend another's stairs. But that which beyond all else shall lie heavy on thee will be the dull depraved company<sup>2</sup> with whom thou shalt descend into the vale of misery; for utterly thankless, utterly mad and inhuman will they become in their treatment of thee; but in no long time they, and not thou, shall blush with shame for it. Of their brutishness their proceedings will furnish the evidence, so that it will be to thine honour to have formed a party to thyself. Thy first refuge and thy first hostel will be the courtesy of the great Lombard, who above the ladder bears the holy bird<sup>3</sup>; and so benevolently will he regard thee, that, in conferring and asking favours, between you two that will come first which between others comes later<sup>4</sup>. With him thou wilt see the man<sup>5</sup>, who at his birth was impressed so mightily by this potent star, that his achievements will be famous. As yet by reason of his youth men have no knowledge of him, for only nine years

Bartolommeo della Scala; Can Grande.

<sup>1</sup> Boniface VIII in Rome.

<sup>2</sup> His fellow-exiles.

<sup>3</sup> The arms of the Scaligers of Verona were a golden ladder surmounted by a black eagle. The great Lombard here spoken of is Bartolommeo della Scala.

<sup>4</sup> viz. conferring favours.

<sup>5</sup> Can Grande.

have these spheres revolved around him; but ere the Gascon<sup>1</sup> deceives the great Henry, bright tokens of his mighty spirit will appear in his indifference alike to money and to fatigue. His glorious deeds will hereafter be so widely known, that his foes will be unable to hold their peace concerning them. In him and his good offices place thy hopes; through him the fortunes of many will be altered, with interchange of estate between rich and poor. And thou shalt bear away with thee in thy mind a record concerning him, but shalt not divulge it;’ and he mentioned things, which those who witness them will not believe. Anon he added: ‘My son, these are the explanations of that which hath been intimated to thee; these are the snares which are excluded from view by a few revolving years. Howbeit I would not have thee envy thy neighbours, seeing that thy life will be prolonged far beyond the punishment of their perfidies.’

He counsels  
Dante to  
divulge his  
Vision.

When by its silence that sainted soul showed that it had finished putting the woof into that web which I had given to it warped, I began, like one who, when in doubt, appeals for advice to a man who hath insight, and is upright in will, and loves him: ‘My father, I clearly see that time is speeding toward me, to deal me such a blow as falls heaviest on him who goes heedless on his way; wherefore ’tis well that I should arm me with foresight, so that, if my best-loved dwelling-place be lost to me, I may not by my poetry<sup>2</sup> be deprived of the others. Below in the world of everlasting pain, and on the Mountain from whose fair summit my Lady’s eyes uplifted me, and afterwards in Heaven, passing from light to light, I have learnt things, which, should I repeat

<sup>1</sup> Clement V, who supported Henry of Luxemburg when he came to Italy in 1310, but afterwards opposed him.

<sup>2</sup> i. e., through too plain speaking in what he wrote.



them, to many persons would taste full bitterly ; yet, if I am faint-hearted in advocating the truth, I fear lest I should cease to live in the memory of those, who will call our time the days of old.' The light within which my treasure whom I found there was smiling, first brightly gleamed, as doth a golden mirror in a ray of sunlight, and anon replied : ' The conscience which is darkened either by its own or by another's shame, 'tis true, will feel thy speech to be rough. Notwithstanding do thou, putting away all untruth, publish abroad thy Vision without reserve, and let them scratch who feel the itch ; for though at the first taste thy words will be unpalatable, after they have been digested they will leave vital nutriment behind. This utterance of thine will act as doth the wind, which smites with greatest force the highest summits ; and hereby no slight proof of worth is furnished. This is the reason why in these spheres, on the Mountain, and in the doleful vale only the spirits of note have been shown to thee ; for the mind of the hearer doth not rest satisfied or feel confidence on the strength of an example drawn from what is unknown and hidden, or of other proof which is not clear to view.'

## CANTO XVIII. THE FIFTH AND SIXTH HEAVENS

Now was that blessed mirror rejoicing by himself in his own thought, and I was ruminating on mine, tempering the bitter with the sweet ; and that Lady, who was conducting me to God, said : ' Change thy thoughts ; bethink thee that I stand in the presence of God, who lightens the burden of

Distinguish-  
ed cham-  
pions of the  
Faith.

every wrong.' At the loving sound of my Comforter's voice I turned me round; and as for the love which I then beheld in her saintly eyes, I relinquish at this point the task of describing it; not alone for that I mistrust my power of speech, but by reason of my mind, which without another's guidance cannot so far return upon itself. Of that moment this only can I relate, that as I gazed on her my heart was free from every other longing. While the eternal pleasure which shone immediately on Beatrice, when it beamed from her fair face contented me with its reflected aspect, overpowering me by a radiant smile she said: 'Turn thee and hearken, for not only in mine eyes is Paradise found.' As ever and anon here below the feelings are revealed in the countenance, if they are so keen that the whole soul is absorbed in them, so in the flashing of the saintly splendour toward which I turned me, I recognized his willingness to converse awhile longer with me. He thus began: 'In this fifth grade of the tree, which draws its life from its summit<sup>1</sup>, and evermore bears fruit, and never loses its foliage, there are blessed spirits, who ere they ascended to Heaven were of great fame on earth, so that they would be a rich subject for the highest Muse. Wherefore turn thine eyes toward the arms of the cross, and he that I now shall name will do there what in a thunder-cloud its swift flash doth.' I saw a light pass along the cross at the name of Joshua, even as it was uttered, nor did my hearing anticipate my sight. And at the name of the great Maccabeus I saw another go whirling on its way, and joy was the lash that set the top in motion. In like manner my watchful look followed two such lights, corresponding to Charlemagne and Roland, even as

<sup>1</sup> The Heaven of Mars is the fifth sphere of Paradise, the life of which realm proceeds from God in the Empyrean.

the hunter's eye follows his falcon in its flight. Anon by William <sup>1</sup> and by Renouard mine eyes were drawn along that cross, and by Duke Godfrey <sup>2</sup> and Robert Guiscard <sup>3</sup>. Then, departing and taking his station among the other luminaries, the spirit that had spoken to me displayed to me his skill amid the heavenly choir.

I turned me toward my right side, to learn from Beatrice by word or gesture what I ought to do, and I beheld her eyes so lucid, so joyful, that her countenance surpassed its former, and even its latest wont. And as through increased sense of pleasure in good works a man is daily conscious of his progress in virtue, so did I become aware that the circle which I described in revolving with the heavens had increased its circumference <sup>4</sup>, by seeing that marvel of beauty more glorious still. And as is the change which quickly passes over a fair lady's face, when it casts off the burden of shame, such, when I turned me, was the change which I perceived <sup>5</sup>, by reason of the whiteness of the temperate sixth planet, which had received me into itself. Within that torch of Jove I saw the sparkling of the love that it contained delineate before mine eyes our human speech. And even as birds, rising from off a river-bank, as if to express their mutual enjoyment of their food, group themselves, now in a ring, now in other figures; so, enveloped in those lights, did saintly beings <sup>6</sup> sing as they flitted, and form now D, now I, now L in the shapes they

The sixth  
Heaven, of  
Jupiter;  
spirits of  
just rulers.

<sup>1</sup> Count of Orange in Charlemagne's age, who fought against the Saracens in the south of France. Renouard was his companion in arms.

<sup>2</sup> Godfrey of Bouillon, the leader of the First Crusade.

<sup>3</sup> The leader of the Normans, who expelled the Saracens from Italy.

<sup>4</sup> Dante has now entered the Heaven of Jupiter, which is higher, and therefore wider in its revolution, than the preceding one.

<sup>5</sup> The ruddy hue of Mars is exchanged for the white light of Jupiter.

<sup>6</sup> The spirits of just rulers.

assumed. First, as they sang, they followed their music in their movements; anon, when they took the form of one of these letters, they paused awhile and held their peace.

The Imperial Eagle.

O Pegasean goddess<sup>1</sup>, who dost glorify men of genius and render them immortal, as they by thine aid do cities and kingdoms, give me of thy light, that I may describe their forms as I have conceived them; in these scant verses of mine may thy power appear. In five and thirty vowels and consonants the saintly beings displayed themselves; and I noted the parts, as methought they were indicated. *Diligite iustitiam*<sup>2</sup> were the first verb and noun of all that was depicted; *qui iudicatis terram* were the last. Then on the M of the fifth word they remained in their positions, so that Jupiter there resembled silver inlaid with gold<sup>3</sup>. And other lights I saw descend where was the summit of the M, and settle there, celebrating in song, I ween, that grace which doth attract them. Anon, as when burnt logs of wood are smitten innumerable sparks arise, wherefrom the simple folk are wont to divine, so from that point a thousand lights and more were seen to rise again, and to ascend, some more, some less, according as the Sun who kindles them ordained for them; and when they had settled, each in his rightful place, I beheld an eagle's<sup>4</sup> head and neck represented by that inlaid fire. The Artist who designs that figure hath none to guide Him, but is Himself the guide, and we recognize that from Him the power proceeds, which is the formative instinct whereby birds

<sup>1</sup> The Muse.

<sup>2</sup> These are the first words of the Book of Wisdom, 'Love righteousness, ye that be judges of the earth.'

<sup>3</sup> A pattern of gold on a field of silver.

<sup>4</sup> The Empire, of which the eagle was the emblem, was to Dante the embodiment of justice.



build their nests<sup>1</sup>. The other saintly band, which seemed at first content to take the shape of the lily in forming the M<sup>2</sup>, with slight change of position followed out the figure<sup>3</sup>.

O lovely planet, by how many and how bright gems was it made plain to me, that our justice is derived from that Heaven whereof thou art the jewel! Wherefore I beseech the Mind, in which the origin of thy motion and thy power is found, to consider whence the smoke proceeds which bedims thy ray<sup>4</sup>; so that now, as once before, He may wax wroth against the buying and selling in the temple, whose walls were built of the blood and sufferings of martyrs. Ye heavenly host, on whom my thoughts are fixed, supplicate on behalf of those, who on earth by the guiding of bad example are all led astray. Erewhile the sword was the weapon of war; but at the present time it is waged by interdicting, now here, now there, the bread which the merciful Father denies to none. But do thou<sup>5</sup>, who issuest excommunications only to revoke them, bethink thee that Peter and Paul, who died for the vineyard which thou spoilest, are yet alive. Doubtless thou mayst say: 'So steadfastly is my heart set on the eremite, who through another's dancing was brought to martyrdom<sup>6</sup>, that of the Fisherman and Paul I have no knowledge.'

The need on earth of the interposition of Heaven.

<sup>1</sup> The power which groups these spirits into the figure of the eagle is the Mind of God, which in like manner by an instinctive process causes birds to build their nests.

<sup>2</sup> The Gothic M closely resembles the *fleur-de-lis* in shape.

<sup>3</sup> i. e. completed the shape of the eagle by forming the body and wings.

<sup>4</sup> The corruptions of the Papal court are meant.

<sup>5</sup> John XXII, who was Pope at Avignon at the time when Dante was writing.

<sup>6</sup> St. John the Baptist, or rather his figure on the golden florinus, which were coined by John XXII in imitation of those of Florence.

CANTO XIX. THE SIXTH HEAVEN,  
OF JUPITER

The eagle  
speaks.

With wings outspread the fair image appeared in front of me, which the banded spirits, rejoicing in their sweet fruition, composed. Each of them resembled a ruby wherein a sun-beam flamed so glowingly, that it refracted that ray into mine eyes. And that which I must now describe, no tongue hath expressed, nor ink recorded, nor hath imagination ever conceived; for I saw, nay, more, I heard the beak utter words, and form with its voice the sound of 'I' and 'mine,' when what was meant was 'we' and 'our.' It thus commenced: 'On the strength of my justice and my mercy I am here exalted to glory so great, that it surpasses all that can be desired; and the record which I left behind on earth is such, that the sinful folk there praise it, though they heed not the moral of the tale.' As from many burning embers a single heat is felt to proceed, so did a single sound arising from loves manifold issue from that image. Thereupon I said: 'Ye unfading flowers of the eternal gladness, who cause all your odours to appear but one to me, allay for me by your breath the keen hunger, wherewith for a long season I have been afflicted, finding on earth no food to appease it. Full sure I am that, if another of the heavenly realms<sup>1</sup> is ordained by the divine justice as its mirror, your realm beholds it unveiled. Ye know with what attention I am prepared to listen; ye know too the nature of the doubt, which is to me a craving of so long standing.'

As a falcon, when its hood is withdrawn, moves its head and claps its wings, exhibiting its readiness and preening

<sup>1</sup> The Order of the Thrones is meant; cp. *Par.* ix. 61, 62.

itself; such was the aspect which I saw that figure assume, which was composed of beings in whom the glory of the divine grace appears, uttering songs, the rapture whereof he knows who rejoices on high. Anon it began<sup>1</sup>: 'He who turned round his compasses at the world's outer verge<sup>2</sup>, and within it wrought effects so various—some dark to us, some clear—could not leave the impress of His power on the whole universe so forcibly, that His wisdom should fail to be infinitely in excess of it. Hence it is clear that the first proud spirit<sup>3</sup>, who was the highest of all created beings, fell while still immature, because he would not wait for light: and from this it appears, that every nature inferior to his hath scant power of comprehending the infinite and incomparable Good. Consequently, our gift of sight, which assuredly is but one of the rays that emanate from the Mind which pervades all things, from its very nature cannot possess so great power, that the Being from whom it proceeds should fail to see far beyond its range of vision. Wherefore the sight wherewith your world is endowed penetrates just so far into the depths of the eternal justice, as doth the eye into the sea; for, albeit from the shore it sees the bottom, in the deep sea it doth not so; yet it is there notwithstanding, but the depth hides it from view. There is no light, but what proceeds from the serene Heaven which is never overcast; all other light is darkness, being either the shadow of the flesh or the poison

The exclu-  
sion of the  
virtuous  
heathen  
from  
Heaven.

<sup>1</sup> The question is: How is it reconcilable with God's justice, that virtuous heathen, who have not heard the name of Christ, or had an opportunity of receiving baptism, should be excluded from Paradise? The answer ultimately arrived at is, that it is an inscrutable mystery, hidden in the depths of God's justice, which it is impossible for the human intellect to fathom.

<sup>2</sup> i. e. measured the earth; cp. Job xxxviii. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Lucifer.

thereof<sup>1</sup>. The covert is now laid fully open to thy view, which concealed from thee the living justice, concerning which thou hadst so frequent questionings: for thou saidst: "On the banks of Indus a man is born, where there is none to tell of Christ, or to read or write of Him; and all his wishes and acts are good, so far as human reason sees, without taint of sin in his life and his discourse. He dies unbaptized without knowledge of the faith; say, is it justice to condemn him? Is it his fault, if he doth not believe?" Now who art thou, who wouldst take thy seat on the bench, to pass judgement on what is a thousand miles away, when thine eyesight reaches but a span? In sooth, if the Scripture did not determine the matter for you<sup>2</sup>, the man who meets me with such subtle arguments would have surprisingly good reason for doubting. Ye earthly beings! Ye dull understandings! The primal Will, which in itself is good, can never be other than itself, the Highest Good. That only is just, which is consonant with that Will; no virtue in the creature doth attract it; nay itself, by diffusing its rays, doth cause that virtue.' As the stork circles round above the nest after she hath fed her young, and as the bird that hath been fed regards her, so was it with that blessed image, which waved its wings, impelled by so many wills, and in such wise did I uplift mine eyes. As it wheeled round it chanted, saying: 'As are the words of my song to thee who comprehendest them not, such to you mortals is the judgement of the eternal One.'

Examples of  
unrighteous  
sovereigns.

After those luminous ardours of the Holy Spirit ceased to move, still forming the figure which caused the world to

<sup>1</sup> Either ignorance or sensuality.

<sup>2</sup> The Scripture says that none can be saved without faith in Christ and baptism.



reverence the Romans<sup>1</sup>, it began anew: 'Unto this realm none ever ascended who did not believe in Christ, either before or after He was nailed to the cross. But mark you, many exclaim "Christ," "Christ," who at the judgement shall be far less near to Him than one who knows not Christ; and such-like Christians the Ethiopian<sup>2</sup> shall condemn, when the two companies shall separate, the one for evermore rich, the other poor. What charges will not the Persians have against your kings, when they see that volume opened, wherein all their discreditable actions are recorded? There among Albert's deeds will be seen that one, which will soon set in motion the recording Angel's pen—that deed whereby the kingdom of Prague will be laid waste<sup>3</sup>. There will be seen the misery which is caused on the banks of Seine, through adulteration of the coinage, by him who shall meet his death from the charge of a boar<sup>4</sup>. There will be seen the pride which creates thirst, whereby the rulers of Scotland and England are so intoxicated, that they cannot restrain themselves within their borders<sup>5</sup>. The wantonness and effeminate life of the sovereign of Spain<sup>6</sup> will be seen, and of him of Bohemia<sup>7</sup>, who never understood or desired uprightness. Against the name of the Cripple of Jerusalem<sup>8</sup> it will be seen that his virtue is marked by an I, his vice by an M<sup>9</sup>. There will be seen the avarice and meanness of him who

<sup>1</sup> The eagle.

<sup>2</sup> This and 'the Persians' below signify any heathen peoples.

<sup>3</sup> The emperor Albert invaded and devastated Bohemia.

<sup>4</sup> Philip the Fair, who died in consequence of a fall from his horse, caused by the charge of a boar.

<sup>5</sup> The border wars in the time of Edward I are referred to.

<sup>6</sup> Ferdinand IV of Castile.

<sup>7</sup> Wenceslaus IV.

<sup>8</sup> Charles II of Naples, who claimed the title of king of Jerusalem.

<sup>9</sup> His virtue by a unit, his vice by a thousand.

rules the island of fire<sup>1</sup>, where Anchises ended his long life; and to let men know how paltry he is, the writing against him will take the form of abbreviations, which within a small space will enumerate many crimes: and his uncle's<sup>2</sup> and his brother's<sup>3</sup> foul dealings, which have dishonoured so noble a family and two crowns, will be manifest to all. There too the kings of Portugal<sup>4</sup> and Norway<sup>5</sup> will be recognized, and he of Rascia<sup>6</sup>, who in an evil hour saw the coin of Venice. O happy Hungary, if she suffer herself no longer to be evil entreated<sup>7</sup>! Happy too Navarre, if she should defend herself with the mountain<sup>8</sup> that girds her! And men will do well to reflect, that even now, in proof of this, Nicosia and Famagosta<sup>9</sup> are lamenting and complaining aloud by reason of their inhuman lord, who walks hand in hand with the aforementioned evil-doers.'

## CANTO XX. THE SIXTH HEAVEN, OF JUPITER

The spirits  
sing.

When he who enlightens the universe sinks so far beneath our hemisphere that the daylight fails on every side, the sky,

<sup>1</sup> Frederic II, king of Sicily.

<sup>2</sup> James, king of the Balearic Islands.

<sup>3</sup> James of Aragon.

<sup>4</sup> Dionysius.

<sup>5</sup> Hakon Longshanks.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Ouros, king of Rascia, the modern Illyria and Dalmatia. He struck coins of debased metal in imitation of the Venetian ducat.

<sup>7</sup> Hungary, after a succession of corrupt princes, had now a good king in Andrea III.

<sup>8</sup> The Pyrenees. Joan of Navarre had married Philip the Fair, but governed her kingdom independently.

<sup>9</sup> Cyprus, of which these were the chief cities, was being badly governed by Henry II of Lusignan. This was a warning to Navarre to keep the French at bay.

which ere that is illuminated by him alone, suddenly reveals itself anew by numerous lights, which are but the reflexion of one <sup>1</sup>. This change which passes over the heavens occurred to my mind, so soon as the ensign of the world and of its leaders kept silence in its sacred beak; for all those living lights, becoming brighter far, began to sing songs so hard to retain that they have passed away from my memory. O sweet love, that dost vest thyself in smiles, what ardour didst thou manifest in those flutes, which were inspired by saintly thoughts alone!

After the precious gleaming gems, wherewith I saw the sixth luminary adorned, had imposed silence on their angelic chime, methought I heard the murmuring of a stream, whose limpid current descends from rock to rock, displaying the wealth of waters of its mountain source. And as at the neck of the guitar a sound takes form, and as at the vent of a reed-pipe doth wind that enters it, so without further delay that murmuring sound within the eagle rose upward through the throat, as if it were perforated. There it became a voice, and thence it issued through its beak in the form of such words as I inscribed on my expectant memory. 'That organ of mine which in mortal eagles sees and endures the sun,' it began, 'thou shouldst now regard steadfastly, because among the fires whereof my figure is composed, those wherewith mine eye sparkles in my head are the highest of all the orders of their sphere. He that shines in the centre as the pupil was the Holy Spirit's singer <sup>2</sup>, who transported the ark from town to town. Now he is aware of the merit of his song, so far as it proceeded from his own free will, through the equivalent remuneration. Of the five which form a curve to represent

The pupil and eye-brow of the eagle's eye.

<sup>1</sup> According to the astronomy of this time all the stars derived their light from the sun,

<sup>2</sup> David.

mine eyebrow, he that is nearest to my beak consoled the poor widow for her son<sup>1</sup>. Now he is aware how dear it costs not to be Christ's disciple, through experience of this sweet life and of the contrary<sup>2</sup>. And he who comes next in the curve whereof I speak, on the ascending arc, by sincere penitence postponed his death<sup>3</sup>. Now he is aware that the eternal judgement is not changed, when on earth a worthy prayer postpones to the future that which was ordained for the present time. The next in order<sup>4</sup>, moved by a good purpose which bore evil fruit, bearing with him the laws and me, to make way for the Pontiff became a Greek<sup>5</sup>. Now he is aware that the bad results of his good actions injure him not, albeit the world is ruined thereby. And he whom thou seest on the downward slope of the arc, was that William<sup>6</sup> whom the country regrets, which is suffering from Charles' and Frederic's present rule. Now he is aware that Heaven loves well a righteous king, and in the aspect of his effulgence he reveals it still. Who in the misguided world below would believe that Rhipheus<sup>7</sup> the Trojan was the fifth of the sainted lights in this arc? Now he knows much of the mystery of God's grace which is hidden from the world, albeit even his sight cannot fathom it.'

Even as a lark, which sings at first while it soars in air, and anon is silent, content with the fullness of its final melody,

<sup>1</sup> Trajan. The story is given in *Purg.* x. 73-93.

<sup>2</sup> Trajan was in Hell, until he was delivered by St. Gregory's prayers.

<sup>3</sup> Hezekiah; 2 Kings xx. 1, 6.

<sup>4</sup> Constantine.

<sup>5</sup> i. e. in founding Constantinople he left Rome under the influence of the Pope.

<sup>6</sup> William the Good, king of Apulia and Sicily, which countries were now governed by Charles the Lame and Frederic of Aragon respectively.

<sup>7</sup> The most just man in Troy; *Virg. Aen.* ii. 426, 427.



such to my mind was the image <sup>1</sup> of the imprint of the divine pleasure, according to whose will everything assumes its proper nature. And albeit I revealed my doubt as transparently as doth glass the colour which mantles it, that doubt would not endure to bide in silence a fitting time; but by its pressure it forced from my lips the words: 'How can these things be?' whereat I beheld great joy of coruscation. Thereupon, to deliver me from suspense of wonderment, with eye still brighter the blessed emblem replied to me: 'I perceive that thou believest these things because I say them, but how they can be true thou seest not; so that, though they receive thy assent, they still are dark to thee. Thou resemblest one, who knows a thing well by name, but cannot see its true nature unless another explain it to him. The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence from ardent love and lively hope, which conquer the divine will; not as when one man wins pre-eminence over another, but they conquer it because it desires to be conquered, and by being conquered triumphs through its benevolence. The first of the spirits in the eyebrow and the fifth cause thee surprise, because thou seest the region of the Angels adorned with them. They quitted their bodies, not, as thou supposest, as heathens, but as Christians, in steadfast faith, the one in Christ's feet before they suffered, the other after; for the latter of them <sup>2</sup> returned to his human frame from Hell, where none doth ever regain an upright will, and this was the reward of lively hope; of lively hope, which infused efficacy into the prayers offered to God <sup>3</sup> for his restoration to life, so that his will might be capable of being moved. The glorious spirit whereof I speak, after returning to the flesh, wherein he abode but a brief space, believed in Him

The admission of Trajan and Rhipeus into heaven.

<sup>1</sup> The eagle, which represents the divinely appointed Monarchy.

<sup>2</sup> Trajan.

<sup>3</sup> By St. Gregory.

who had power to aid him; and through that belief he was kindled to so great ardour of true love, that when he died a second time he was worthy to be admitted to this festivity. The other <sup>1</sup>, through grace, which emanates from a fountain so deep, that eye of created being did never penetrate to the first movement of its waters, set his affections, when on earth, wholly on righteousness; and therefore, in his progress from grace to grace, God opened his eyes to our coming redemption: so that he believed in it, and thenceforward endured no longer the corruptions of paganism, and censured the froward people for its taint. For him in the stead of baptism the three Ladies whom thou sawest at the right wheel <sup>2</sup> did stand, a thousand years and more ere that rite was instituted. O predestination, how far withdrawn is thy root from the views of those, who see not the first cause in its entirety! And ye, O mortals, be not overbold in passing judgement, for we who see God's face know not as yet all the elect; and this lack of knowledge is pleasing to us, inasmuch as our good is perfected in this good, that God's will is also our will.' Thus by that divine image was a grateful remedy provided to clear my defective sight. And as a good harp-player accompanies a good singer with the vibration of his strings, whereby the charm of the song is enhanced; so while it spake I remember that I saw the two saintly lights <sup>3</sup> wave their flamelets in accordance with its words, simultaneously with each other, like the movement of the eyes.

<sup>1</sup> Rhipeus.

<sup>2</sup> Faith, Hope and Charity, whom Dante had seen by the right-hand wheel of the Car in the Earthly Paradise.

<sup>3</sup> The spirits of Trajan and Rhipeus.

CANTO XXI. THE SEVENTH HEAVEN,  
OF SATURN

Already were mine eyes fastened anew on my Lady's countenance, and with them my mind, which had withdrawn itself from every other thought; and she smiled not, but addressed me thus: 'If I should smile, thou wouldst become like Semele, when she was turned to ashes<sup>1</sup>; for my beauty, which in passing from stair to stair of the eternal palace becomes more radiant, as thou hast seen, in proportion as it rises, were it not modified, hath so great lustre, that before its effulgence thy mortal powers would be even as a leaf that is rent by the lightning-flash. We are exalted to the seventh luminary<sup>2</sup>, which now beneath the burning Lion's breast sheds downward its influence mingled with his power. Let thy mind follow thine eyes attentively, and let them mirror for thee the figure<sup>3</sup>, which in this mirror<sup>4</sup> will reveal itself to thee.' He that could conceive my joy in feasting mine eyes on that blest countenance, could estimate the greatness of my delight in obeying my celestial Guide as I turned my thoughts towards another interest, when he balanced the one scale against the other.

The seventh Heaven, of Saturn; the contemplative spirits.

Within the crystal sphere, which, as it revolves round the world, bears its illustrious sovereign's name, beneath whose rule all malice was extinguished<sup>5</sup>, I beheld a stairway, in colour like unto gold whereon sunshine gleams, which rose

The celestial stairway.

<sup>1</sup> This was the result of her seeing the full majesty of Jupiter.

<sup>2</sup> Saturn. In the spring of 1300, which was the supposed time of Dante's Vision, this planet was in the sign of Leo.

<sup>3</sup> The stairway, which is described below.

<sup>4</sup> The planet, which shone by the sun's reflected light.

<sup>5</sup> The reign of Saturn was the Golden Age.

aloft so high that my sight failed to follow it. Withal adown its stairs I saw lustres<sup>1</sup> so manifold descend, that I fancied all the lights which shine in heaven were there outspread. And as at dawn of day, following their natural wont, the rooks rise all together to warm their chilly plumage, and anon some depart and turn not back, while some repair again to their starting-place, and others abide wheeling round and round; so was it there, methought, with those bright spirits which arrived in company, so soon as they lighted on a certain stair; and the one which stayed its movement the nearest to us<sup>2</sup> became so luminous, that to myself I said: 'In sooth I perceive the love thou dost intimate to me.' But she to whose guidance I look for the manner and the time of speech and silence, is mute; and so, though all unwilling, I do well in withholding my question. Wherefore, viewing my silence, as she did, in the face of the all-seeing One, she said to me: 'Appease thy fervent desire.'

Divine pre-  
destination.

And I began: 'No merit of mine makes me deserve a reply from thee; yet for her sake who grants me leave to ask, blessed spirit, who art shrouded with thy gladness, declare to me the cause which hath brought thee so nigh to me; and tell me wherefore in this sphere the sweet symphony of Paradise is not heard, which in the others below sounds so rapturously.' 'Thy hearing,' he replied, 'even as thy sight, is mortal; wherefore for the same reason for which Beatrice doth not smile no songs are uttered here<sup>3</sup>. 'Twas only that I might greet thee with my speech, and with the light that doth invest me, that I have descended so far along the steps

<sup>1</sup> The spirits of the Contemplative, who are found in this Heaven.

<sup>2</sup> This is St. Peter Damian (eleventh century).

<sup>3</sup> The reason is, that Dante's faculties would have been paralysed by it, owing to the sublime spirituality which is produced by contemplation.



of the sacred stairway : nor was it greater love which caused me to be more eager, for love as great as mine or greater doth flame above us here, as the coruscation testifies to thee ; but that sublime affection, which makes us ready ministers of the Mind that rules the universe, ordains our functions here, as thou perceivest.' 'I clearly see, thou sacred luminary,' I said, 'that in this court love doth avail self-guided to execute the designs of the eternal providence ; but the point which I find hard to discern is this, wherefore thou alone of all thy company wast predestined to this office.' Ere I had reached my concluding word that light, taking for a centre its midmost point, revolved like a mill-stone at full speed ; anon the love that was within it made reply : 'A ray divine doth alight upon me, passing through this light wherein I am embosomed ; and its power in conjunction with mine insight doth transport me so, that I behold the supreme essence whence it emanates. This is the source of the gladness wherewith I blaze, for in proportion to the clearness of my vision of God is the brightness of my flame. But neither the soul in Heaven that hath most light, nor the Seraph whose eye is most riveted on God, could satisfy thine inquiry, seeing that what thou askest lies so deep in the abyss of the eternal ordinance, that it is withdrawn from mortal ken. And when thou returnest to the world of men, do thou report this truth, that they may no more presume to move their feet toward so high a goal. The mind which here is clear, on earth is obscured by smoke ; consider then, how can it do below, what is beyond its power even when received in Heaven ?'

The check his words imposed on me was such, that I relinquished the question, and confined myself to inquiring humbly who he was. 'Between two coasts of Italy, at no

St. Peter  
Damian.

great distance from thy fatherland, a rocky ridge<sup>1</sup> doth rise so high that the sound of the thunder is heard far below; and it forms a mountain-height named Catria, beneath which a monastery<sup>2</sup> is consecrated, which was wont to be devoted to worship only.' Thus he commenced anew to me his third address; anon pursuing his speech he said: 'There to God's service I dedicated myself so earnestly, that with the juice of the olive for my only food I cheerfully experienced heat and cold, contented with my contemplative reflexions. Erewhile to these spheres that cloister yielded an abundant crop; but now it hath become unfruitful, so that its true character must soon be revealed. In that place I was known as Peter Damian; and Peter the Sinner was my name in the house of Our Lady on the Adriatic shore<sup>3</sup>. A brief spell of mortal life remained to me, when I was sought out and forced to wear the hat<sup>4</sup>, which in passing from one holder to another only goes from bad to worse. When Cephas and the chosen vessel of the Holy Spirit<sup>5</sup> came, they were lean and barefoot, and got their food from any chance hostelry. Now the pastors of these latter days need supporters on either side, so ponderous are they, and others to lead them, and to hold up their trains. With their capes they overspread their palfreys, so that two beasts move beneath one skin: long-suffering of God, how great the load thou endurest!' At the sound of these words I saw manifold flamelets descend revolving from stair to stair, and with each gyration they increased in beauty. Around that spirit they gathered, and

<sup>1</sup> The Apennines.

<sup>2</sup> The monastery of Fonte Avellana in the neighbourhood of Gubbio.

<sup>3</sup> The monastery of Santa Maria in Pomposa, where St. Peter Damian resided for two years in the early part of his life.

<sup>4</sup> He was made Cardinal.

<sup>5</sup> St. Paul; Acts ix. 15.

halting there, raised a cry of such intensity, that no comparison could be found for it on earth; nor did I comprehend the meaning, being overpowered by its thunder.

## CANTO XXII. THE SEVENTH AND EIGHTH HEAVENS

Oppressed by stupor I turned me to my Guide, like a child that ever betakes itself to its best source of confidence; and she, like a mother who promptly succours her pale and breathless offspring with her voice which reassures it, said to me: ‘Knowst thou not that thou art in Heaven? and knowst thou not that in Heaven all is holy, and that what is done here proceeds from righteous zeal? Now thou canst conceive how the singing would have overpowered thee, and I by my smile, seeing that this cry hath appalled thee so; whereby, hadst thou understood its supplication, the vengeance which ere thy death thou shalt behold would even now be known to thee. The sword of these high realms is not hasty to strike, nor yet remiss, save in the view of him who awaits it in longing or in fear. But turn thee round now toward the other spirits, for exceeding noble are those whom thou wilt see, if, as I bid thee, thou revert thine eyes.’

Dante is over-powered by the cry of the spirits.

I looked as she directed me, and beheld a hundred little St. Benedict. globes of light, which all together increased in splendour through their mutual brilliancy. I stood like one who represses the urgency of his desire, and from dread of exceeding his limits ventures not to inquire. Then did the greatest and most luminous of those pearls advance, to satisfy my wish concerning itself. Anon within it I heard as follows: ‘If thou couldst see, as I do, the love which glows among us, the

conceits of thy mind would find expression; but that thou mayst not by waiting be delayed in reaching thy lofty goal, I will reply to the thought alone which thou art so scrupulous of uttering. The mountain<sup>1</sup> on the slope whereof Cassino lies, was of yore on its summit the resort of misguided and perverse folk; and I am he who first bore aloft there the name of Him, by whom the truth which so exalts us was brought to earth: and so great a measure of grace illuminated me, that I converted the neighbouring towns from the impious worship<sup>2</sup> which led the world astray. These other fires were all contemplative men, enkindled by that fervour which generates the flowers and fruits of saintliness. Here is Macarius<sup>3</sup>, here is Romuald<sup>4</sup>; here are my brethren, who abode steadfastly within their cloisters and remained sound at heart.'

Corruption  
of the  
Benedictine  
Order.

And I to him: 'The good will thou dost evince in speaking to me, and the benevolent aspect which I see and note in all your flames, have expanded my confidence, even as the sun doth the rose, when it opens to the utmost of its power; wherefore I pray thee, father, let me know for sure, whether I can win such a measure of grace, that I may behold thee with unveiled form<sup>5</sup>.' And he replied: 'Brother, thy lofty desire will find its satisfaction in the last sphere<sup>6</sup>, where all other desires, including mine own, are satisfied. There every longing is perfect, mature and complete; in it alone every part abides where it hath ever been, seeing that it doth not exist in space or turn on poles; and unto it our stairway

<sup>1</sup> Monte Cassino, where St. Benedict (480-543) founded his monastery. It stands about half-way between Rome and Naples.

<sup>2</sup> Paganism.

<sup>3</sup> The Egyptian anchorite of the fourth century.

<sup>4</sup> Founder of the monastery of Camaldoli in 1012.

<sup>5</sup> i. e. without the enveloping light.

<sup>6</sup> The Empyrean.



reaches, for which cause it is thus hidden from thy sight. Unto that height the patriarch Jacob saw it uplift its summit, when it met his eyes bearing a multitude of Angels. But now to ascend it no one lifts his feet from off the earth, and my Rule remains but to cause waste of paper<sup>1</sup>. The walls which were wont to form an abbey have become dens of thieves, and the cowls are sacks filled with worthless flour. But grievous usury rises not up as so great an offence against God's will, as that fruit whereby the monks' hearts are rendered so insensate<sup>2</sup>; for whatever is in the Church's keeping belongs wholly to those who petition for it in God's name, not to kinsfolk or to fouler claimants. The flesh of mankind is so weak, that on earth a good commencement doth not maintain its efficacy from the springing of the oak till its acorns are formed. Peter founded his society without gold and silver, and I mine with prayer and fasting, and Francis his in the spirit of humility. And if thou regardest each of these at its starting-point, and thou dost consider it in its changed estate, thou wilt see that what once was white hath become dark. Nevertheless the turning back of Jordan's stream, and the retreating of the sea, when God so willed, were greater miracles to behold than relief in the present case would be<sup>3</sup>. Thus spake he to me, and thereupon withdrew into his company, and that company closed together; anon like a whirlwind it rose aloft.

By a single gesture my sweet Lady impelled me up that stairway in their wake, so wholly was my nature mastered by her influence; nor ever here below, where we rise and fall according to nature's laws, was movement so rapid, that it

The eighth  
Heaven, of  
the Fixed  
Stars;  
Gemini.

<sup>1</sup> The rules of the Benedictine Order are copied out but not observed.

<sup>2</sup> Covetousness in misappropriating the revenues of the Church.

<sup>3</sup> The meaning is, that the case is not desperate.

could compare with my flight. As surely, Reader, as I hope to return sometime to the triumph of the Saints, with a view to which I oftentimes bewail my sins and smite my breast, thou wouldst not, after putting thy finger in the fire, as swiftly withdraw it, as, after seeing the constellation which follows the Bull<sup>1</sup>, I found myself within it. O glorious stars, O light that teems with mighty influence, from which I recognize that whatever genius I possess proceeds<sup>2</sup>, in your company did he who is the source of human life rise and set, what time I first inhaled the Tuscan air; and after, when the boon was granted me of entering the exalted Heaven which bears you round, your region of the sky was assigned to me. Unto you my soul doth now devoutly sigh, to obtain power to execute the arduous task which demands its attention.

Dante looks  
downward  
to the earth.

‘Thou art so nigh to the source of all beatitude’—thus Beatrice began—‘that there is good need for thine eyes to be clear and keen. Wherefore, ere thou approachest nearer thereto, look downward, and see how great a part of the universe I have already caused to lie beneath thy feet; so that thy heart may present itself in fullness of joy before the triumphant throng<sup>3</sup>, which comes rejoicing through this ethereal ring.’ I looked back at one after another of the seven spheres, and beheld this globe of ours so small, that I smiled at the meanness of its appearance; and that view I approve as best, which estimates it lowest; and whoso turns his thoughts elsewhere may be called truly just. I saw Latona’s daughter illuminated without that shadow which caused me erewhile to ascribe rarity and density to

<sup>1</sup> Gemini. Dante has now risen to the Heaven of the Fixed Stars.

<sup>2</sup> In astrology persons born when the sun was in Gemini were endowed with genius.

<sup>3</sup> The Triumph of Christ, which is described in the next Canto.

her<sup>1</sup>. The aspect of thy son<sup>2</sup>, Hyperion, I there endured, and I saw how Mercury and Venus make their revolutions in his neighbourhood. From that point I beheld the tempering influence of Jupiter between his father and his son<sup>3</sup>; thence too their changes of site were explained to me: and all seven revealed to me their magnitude and their velocity, and the distance of their relative position. That little plot of ground on which we pride ourselves, from the hills to the river-mouths appeared to me in all its details, while I was revolving with the eternal Twins: anon to the beauteous eyes I turned mine own.

### CANTO XXIII. THE EIGHTH HEAVEN, OF THE FIXED STARS

As waits the bird, which through the night, when all is dark to us, hath rested amid the well-loved foliage on the nest where her sweet offspring lie, but, in hopes of seeing their longed-for faces, and finding the food wherewith to nurture them—a grateful though a weary task—anticipates the time upon an open spray, and with ardent affection awaits the sun, watching intently for the breaking of the dawn; so did my Lady stand erect and vigilant, facing that region of the sky<sup>4</sup> beneath which the sun doth moderate his speed; so that, seeing her distraught and wistful, I became like one who is possessed by a vague longing and contents him with the hope. But the interval was brief between the one and the other time—the time of my waiting, I mean, and that when

The  
Triumph  
of Christ  
appears.

<sup>1</sup> See above, Canto ii. Dante now sees the obverse side of the moon, so that the spots were hidden from him.

<sup>2</sup> The sun.

<sup>3</sup> Mars was the fiery, Saturn the cold, Jupiter the temperate planet.

<sup>4</sup> The meridian; cp. *Purg.* xxxiii. 103.

I saw the heaven becoming more and more clear : and Beatrice exclaimed : ‘ Behold the squadrons of Christ’s triumph, and all the fruit that hath been harvested from the revolutions of these spheres.’ Her face, methought, was all aglow, and her eyes were so full of joy, that I must needs pass them over in silence. As on serene nights of full moon Trivia<sup>1</sup> smiles amid the eternal nymphs, which bespangle the sky through all its depths, I beheld, outshining thousands of luminaries, a Sun<sup>2</sup> which enkindled them all, as our sun doth the bright objects on high ; and so brilliantly did the gleaming figure beam through the keen light on mine eyes, that they could not endure it. O Beatrice, how sweet, how loving was thy care ! She said to me : ‘ That which overmasters thy sight is a power which no eye can bear. There is the Wisdom and the Might, who set open the roads that lead from earth to Heaven, for which mankind ere that had so long pined.’ As from a cloud the lightning bursts, when from its expansive force it finds no room therein, and contrary to its nature falls down to earth, so my mind, when expanded by that banquet of delight, was transported beyond itself, and is powerless to remember what happened to it.

Beatrice’s  
indescr-  
ible loveli-  
ness.

‘ Open thine eyes, and see what loveliness is mine ; thou hast beheld things so sublime, that thou hast won the power to endure my smile.’ I was like one who revives the impression of a forgotten vision, but strives in vain to recall that vision to his mind, when I heard this invitation, which deserved such a measure of gratitude, that it never can be erased from the book which registers the past<sup>3</sup>. Should all the tongues which with their sweetest milk Polyhymnia and her sisters<sup>4</sup> made most lubrical, now sound in my behoof,

<sup>1</sup> Diana, i. e. the Moon.

<sup>3</sup> The tablets of memory.

<sup>2</sup> Christ.

<sup>4</sup> The Muses.



I could not attain a fraction of the truth, when singing of that saintly smile, and how it illuminated the saintly countenance. So too, in describing Paradise, the sacred poem must needs skip over, like one who finds an interruption to his road. But whoso reflects on the gravity of the theme, and on the human shoulders which bear the burden, would not find fault if they tremble beneath it. 'Tis no fit voyage for a little boat, this which my daring prow pursues as it cleaves the main, nor for a pilot who spares himself.

'Wherefore doth my face so enamour thee, that thou turnest not toward the fair garden, which blossoms beneath Christ's rays? There is the rose<sup>1</sup>, wherein the divine Word was made flesh; there are the lilies<sup>2</sup>, by whose odour men were led to pursue the right road.' So spake Beatrice; and I, who was the willing slave of her injunctions, essayed once more the struggle of the feeble eyelids. As erewhile mine eyes, themselves in shadow, have seen a flowery mead in a ray of sunlight, which passes undimmed through the break in a cloud, so did I behold multitudes of gleaming lights irradiated from above by glowing beams, though the source of that brilliancy was hidden from me. O kindly Power who dost influence them thus<sup>3</sup>, thou didst ascend to afford me scope to use mine eyes there, which before were powerless. The name of the fair flower which I evermore invoke both at morn and eventide, concentrated my mind on discovering the greatest of those lights. And as soon as the splendour and the magnitude of the living star, who excels in Heaven above, as she did on earth beneath, was depicted on both mine eyes, from the depths of Heaven

The Blessed Virgin and the Archangel Gabriel.

<sup>1</sup> The Blessed Virgin.

<sup>2</sup> The Apostles and Martyrs.

<sup>3</sup> Christ has now ascended, but illuminates from above the company of Saints.

a torch<sup>1</sup> descended, resembling a crown in its circling movement, and cinctured her and revolved around her. The melody which sounds sweetest here below, and most allures the soul, would resemble thunder bursting from a cloud, in comparison of the strains of that lyre, whereby the fair sapphire was encircled, which forms a jewel in the brightest Heaven. 'Angelic love am I, who revolve round the source of joy sublime, the womb where our Desire abode; and there, O Queen of Heaven, I shall revolve until thou followest thy Son, and makest more divine the highest sphere by entering there.' Therewith that melody, as it circled round, came to an end; and all the other luminaries proclaimed aloud the name of Mary.

The company of the Saints.

The royal mantle which envelops all the revolving spheres of the universe<sup>2</sup>—that which is most ardent, and most enkindled by the breath of God's spirit and by its working—had its inner surface so far above us, that from my present station its aspect was not yet in view; wherefore mine eyes were powerless to follow the cinctured flame, which ascended in its offspring's wake. And like an infant, which, after it hath been suckled, reaches out its arms towards its mother, through the impulse which kindles into outward show, each one of those bright spirits stretched its flame aloft, so that the deep affection which they felt for Mary was revealed to me. Then they remained there before mine eyes, singing *Regina cæli* in such dulcet tones, that the delight thereof hath ne'er been lost to me. O how great are the riches stored in those most wealthy coffers, which were good acres for sowing here on earth! There they live joyously on the

<sup>1</sup> The Archangel Gabriel, who circles rapidly round the Blessed Virgin.

<sup>2</sup> The Crystalline Heaven or *Primum Mobile*, which lies outside all the other spheres.

treasure, which was won by tears in the Babylonian exile<sup>1</sup>, where they made naught of gold. There, beneath the exalted Son of God and Mary, doth he<sup>2</sup> triumph in his victory, in company with the saints of the Old and the New Covenant, who holds the keys of this transcendent glory.

## CANTO XXIV. THE EIGHTH HEAVEN, OF THE FIXED STARS

‘O brotherhood, who are called to the great supper of the blessed Lamb, who doth regale you so, that your desires are ever satisfied; if this man through God’s favour hath a fore-taste of what falls from your table e’er death assigns him his appointed time, bethink you of his unbounded longing, and besprinkle him with dew; ye ever drink at the fountain whence the subject of his thought proceeds.’ Thus spake Beatrice: and those glad spirits formed themselves into spheres revolving on fixed poles, which flashed keenly like comets. And as in the mechanism of clocks the wheels circulate in such wise, that to one who watches, the innermost appears at rest and the outermost in rapid motion, so those bands of dancers by their difference in speed, according as they were swift or slow, enabled me to estimate the fullness of their grace. From the band which appeared to me the most beautiful I saw a flame<sup>3</sup> come forth so full of gladness, that none more luminous remained behind it; and thrice it revolved round Beatrice, uttering so divine a song, that my fantasy fails to recall it to me; wherefore my pen skips over, and I write it not, for our imagination—not to say our language—is of a tint too glaring to represent such cadences.

The spirits  
sing and  
dance;  
St. Peter  
advances.

<sup>1</sup> In their mortal life.

<sup>2</sup> St. Peter.

<sup>3</sup> St. Peter.

Beatrice  
begs him  
to examine  
Dante on  
Faith.

‘O saintly sister mine, who dost so earnestly beseech us, by thine ardent love thou dost detach me from yon beauteous ring.’ Such were the words which that blest flame, so soon as it had stayed its movement, breathed toward my Lady. And she: ‘O light eternal of the great man, to whom our Lord consigned the keys of this wondrous abode of joy, which he brought down to earth, examine this one, as pleaseth thee, on questions, be they easy or difficult, appertaining to the faith, in the strength of which thou didst walk upon the sea. Whether he be sound in love and hope and faith, thou knowst full well, since thine eyes are fixed there<sup>1</sup>, where all things are visibly portrayed. But seeing that it is through the true faith that this kingdom hath won its citizens, ’tis well, in order to promote its glory, that he should have occasion to speak thereof.’

The nature  
of Christian  
Faith.

As, while the Master is propounding the question<sup>2</sup>, the Bachelor in silence equips himself, to adduce the proofs, not to determine it; so during her speech did I equip me with every argument, that I might be ready to answer such a questioner, and to make such a profession. ‘Say, good Christian, and let thy reply be clear; What is faith?’ Whereupon I lifted mine eyes toward that light from which these words were breathed; anon I turned me to Beatrice, and she promptly made signal to me, that I should give vent to the stream from the fountain-head within me. ‘May the grace which grants me the privilege of making my confession of faith in the presence of the great centurion of the Church, cause my thoughts to be well expressed.’ Such were my opening words, and I proceeded thus: ‘As thy beloved

<sup>1</sup> On the face of God.

<sup>2</sup> The allusion is to an examination in the mediaeval Universities.



brother<sup>1</sup>, who in thy company set Rome on the right track, wrote for us, father, with his truthful pen, faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the proof of things not seen<sup>2</sup>; and this appears to me to be its essence.' Thereupon I heard: 'Thy view is right, if thou correctly understandest wherefore he classed faith, first among the substances, and secondly among the proofs.' And I in turn: 'The mysteries, the sight whereof is granted to me here, are so hidden from the eyes of men on earth, that they exist there in faith alone, whereupon sublime hope is founded, for which cause it receives the name of substance<sup>3</sup>; and from this faith we are bound to reason without seeing aught beyond; in this way it comes to be called a proof.' Then did I hear: 'If whatever on earth is learned by teaching were as clearly understood as this, sophistry would find no place there.'

Such was the utterance of that ardent love; anon it continued: 'The alloy and the weight of this coin have now been fully dealt with; proceed to tell me whether thou hast it in thy purse.' And I replied: 'Aye; so bright and round, that in its stamp there is no shade of doubt.' Thereupon from the depths of the light which shone there came forth the words: 'This precious jewel, which is the groundwork of every virtue, whence came it to thee?' And I: 'The copious outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which is diffused over the pages of the Old and the New Testament, is an argument which hath proved it to me with clearness so intense, that in comparison thereof every other form of proof seems to me pointless.' Anon I heard: 'The Old and the New Testament, which draw this conclusion for thee, where-

The grounds  
of Christian  
Faith.

<sup>1</sup> St. Paul.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xi. 1.

<sup>3</sup> The word 'substance' (*substantia*) is here used in the sense of 'foundation' (*id quod substat*).

fore dost thou deem them to be the word of God?' And I: 'The evidence which reveals to me the truth is found in the miracles that accompanied it, for the production of which Nature never heated iron or smote the anvil<sup>1</sup>.' Then came the reply: 'Say, who gives thee assurance that those miracles occurred? Thy guarantee is none other than the very book which claims to be authorized by them.' 'If without miracles the world was converted to Christianity,' I said, 'this by itself is so great a miracle, that the others are as nothing in comparison thereof; for thou in poverty and need didst go afield to sow the good plant, which erewhile was a vine, and now hath become a bramble<sup>2</sup>.' At the close of these words 'We praise thee, O God' resounded from the saintly imperial Court throughout their spheres with such melody as is sung on high.

The cardinal doctrine.

Then that Baron, who now in his examination had led me so from branch to branch, that we were drawing nigh to the outermost leaves<sup>3</sup>, commenced afresh: 'The grace which dallies with thy mind hath hitherto opened thy lips appropriately, so that I approve that which proceeded from them; but now thou must declare the articles of thy faith, and on what ground they appealed to thy belief.' 'O holy father, spirit who now beholdest that in which thou didst so firmly believe, that in entering the sepulchre thou didst anticipate the steps of a younger man<sup>4</sup>'—thus I began—'thou desirest me here to state the essential features of my unhesitating belief, and didst inquire withal the grounds thereof. This is my reply: I believe in one only God, the eternal God, who, Himself unmoved, doth set in motion the whole Heaven

<sup>1</sup> i. e. which must have been produced by divine agency.

<sup>2</sup> The corruptions of the Church are referred to.

<sup>3</sup> To the last points which required to be dealt with.

<sup>4</sup> John xx. 4-6.

through love and longing for Him; and this belief is assured to me, not only by physical and metaphysical proofs, but also by the truth which is outpoured from these Heavens through Moses and the prophets and the psalms, through the Gospel and through you who wrote after the fire of the Spirit gave you fostering power: and I believe in three eternal Persons, and that these are one substance so truly one and three, that it admits in concordance of the use of "are" and "is." With the mystery of the divine nature, which I now mention, the teaching of the Gospel in manifold passages doth imprint my mind. This is the cardinal doctrine; this is the spark, whence afterward is developed a living flame<sup>1</sup>, and which glitters in me like a star in the sky.'

Even as the master, who hears good tidings, in his joy at St. Peter's the news thereupon embraces his servant, so soon as he ceases approval. to speak; so, when I held my peace, did the apostolic light, at whose bidding I had spoken, thrice circle round me, chanting a benediction; so pleasing to him were my words.

## CANTO XXV. THE EIGHTH HEAVEN, OF THE FIXED STARS

If ever it come to pass that the sacred poem, to which both St. James heaven and earth have lent a hand, so that for many a year it advances. hath made me lean, overmasters the cruelty which excludes me from the fair sheepfold<sup>2</sup>, where as a lamb I slept, a foe to the wolves which assail it<sup>3</sup>; with other song, with other locks<sup>4</sup> as a poet I shall then return, and at my baptismal font

<sup>1</sup> i. e. system of belief.

<sup>2</sup> Florence.

<sup>3</sup> The leaders of the Florentine factions.

<sup>4</sup> His hair having grown grey.

shall receive the laureate's crown; seeing that there I was initiated into the faith which unites men's souls with God, and that Peter afterward on the strength of that faith thus circled round my head. Anon a light advanced towards us from the same sphere whence he came forth, whom Christ left on earth as the first of his vicegerents; and in fullness of delight my Lady said to me: 'Look, look; behold the Baron, for whose sake on earth men visit Galicia<sup>1</sup>.' As, when a dove alights hard by its mate, by circling round and cooing they display their mutual affection, so did I see one of those great and glorious nobles welcomed by the other, with praises of the fare whereof they partake in Heaven. But so soon as their congratulations were completed, they both stood still in silence facing me, so radiant that my sight was overpowered thereby.

He ques-  
tions Dante  
on the  
subject of  
Hope.

Then Beatrice smiling said: 'Illustrious spirit, by whom the bounteousness of our celestial court was recorded<sup>2</sup>, proclaim aloud the virtue of hope here on high; thou knowst that on every occasion when Jesus revealed Himself more clearly to the three Apostles<sup>3</sup> thou dost represent it.' 'Raise thy head, and see thou take confidence; for whatsoever ascends hither from the mortal world must needs be ripened by our rays.' These words of encouragement came to me from the second flame; whereupon I lifted up mine eyes unto the hills<sup>4</sup>, which erewhile overpowered and depressed them. 'Seeing

<sup>1</sup> St. James the Greater, to whose shrine at Compostella pilgrimages were made.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. James i. 17, 'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above.' Dante is here at fault, for the Epistle of James was written, not by St. James the Greater, but by St. James the Less.

<sup>3</sup> Peter, James and John; the occasions were the Transfiguration, the raising of Jairus' daughter, and the Agony in the Garden.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. cxxi. 1. The two Apostles are here meant.



that of his grace our Sovereign wills, that before thy death thou shouldst meet his nobles face to face in his innermost palace-chamber, so that, after beholding the true aspect of this Court, thou mayst encourage therewith in thyself and in others the hope which on earth begets saintly love; tell me what is the nature of hope, and to what degree it blossoms in thy mind, and whence it came to thee<sup>1</sup>: thus did the second luminary pursue his speech. And that compassionate one, who guided the plumage of my wings unto so lofty a flight, thus anticipated my reply: 'No son of the Church militant hath fuller hope than he, as is recorded on the face of that Sun who illuminates all our host; wherefore it is permitted him, ere his warfare is accomplished, to come from Egypt to visit Jerusalem<sup>1</sup>. The other two questions — which have been asked, not in order to know his views, but that he may report to men how dearly thou dost love this virtue—I leave to him, for they will not be hard, nor a subject for self-praise; so let himself reply, and this favour may God's grace vouchsafe him.'

Like a scholar, who promptly and willingly replies to his teacher on a subject wherewith he is conversant, in order that his proficiency may be displayed, I said: 'Hope is a confident expectation of future glory, arising from the grace of God and from precedent merits. From many stars this light cometh to me; but the one which first shed it on my heart was the sublime singer of the sublime Chieftain<sup>2</sup>. In his Book of Sacred Song he saith: "Let them place their hope in Thee, who know Thy name<sup>3</sup>"; and who doth not know it, if he hath faith like mine? Anon in thy Epistle<sup>4</sup> thou

The nature, the grounds, and the object of Christian Hope.

<sup>1</sup> From the world to the City of God in Heaven.

<sup>2</sup> David, who was God's Psalmist.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. ix. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Not in any special passage, but in its general teaching.

didst bedew me with his bedewing, so that I am saturated therewith, and shower afresh on others the rain which proceeded from you two.' While I was speaking, within the living core of that blaze of light there quivered a flash like lightning, sudden and recurrent. Then it breathed forth this: 'The love wherewith I still burn for that virtue, which followed me till I won my palm and quitted the battle-field, bids me reply to thee, that thou mayst rejoice therein; and it is my pleasure that thou shouldst say what it is which hope promises thee.' And I: 'The scriptures of the New and of the Old Testament set forth the emblem<sup>1</sup>, and this doth indicate it to me. Of the souls whom God hath embraced in His love Isaiah saith, that in their land each of them shall be robed in a double garment<sup>2</sup>; and by their land is meant this joyful life. Thy brother also, where he discourses of the white robes<sup>3</sup>, doth far more explicitly declare to us this revelation.'

St. John the Evangelist appears.

Immediately after the conclusion of these words, first *Sperent in te* was heard above us, whereto all the choruses replied; and anon in their midst a light became so brilliant, that, it Cancer possessed a similar crystal, one month of winter would be perpetual day<sup>4</sup>. And as a maiden gladly rises, and advances, and joins the dance, solely to do honour to the youthful bride, not from any unworthy motive; so did I see that enkindled lustre<sup>5</sup> approach the other two, who were

<sup>1</sup> i. e. declare the truth figuratively.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. lxi. 7. By 'a double garment' Dante understands body and soul to be meant.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. vii. 9.

<sup>4</sup> For a month in mid-winter the constellation of Cancer is in the sky all night long; and Dante says that, if it possessed a star as bright as the light which now appeared, there would be perpetual daylight during that time: from this it results that this luminary had the brightness of the sun.

<sup>5</sup> St. John the Evangelist.

revolving according to the measure of their ardent love. There he joined in their song and their tune; and on them my Lady gazed steadfastly, like a still and silent bride. 'This is he who reclined upon our Pelican's<sup>1</sup> breast, and who from upon the cross was ordained to his exalted office<sup>2</sup>.' Thus spake my Lady; nor, for all that, did her words cause her looks thereafter more than before to withdraw their rapt attention. As one, who, intently looking, essays to see the sun in part eclipsed, by using his sight loses the power of sight, so was it with me in the presence of that last flame, the while he thus bespake: 'Wherefore dost thou daze thine eyes to see an object which is not present here<sup>3</sup>? My body is earth in earth, and will there abide along with the others until our number corresponds to God's eternal ordinance. In the blessed cloister the only spirits who wear both their robes are the two luminaries who ascended<sup>4</sup>; and this truth thou shalt report to your world below.' At the sound of this voice the ardent circling spirits ceased from their movement, simultaneously with the sweet harmony which proceeded from the three Apostles' breath; even as, to avoid fatigue or danger, the oars which before were plied in the water stop all together at a whistle's call. Ah how sadly was my mind distraught, when on turning to regard Beatrice my sight failed me, albeit I was close to her, and in the world of bliss!

<sup>1</sup> The pelican was taken as an emblem of our Saviour, because of the fable in which it was said to feed its young with blood from its own breast.

<sup>2</sup> That of taking charge of the Blessed Virgin.

<sup>3</sup> Dante was anxious to learn whether the legend was true, which reported that St. John had his earthly body in Heaven.

<sup>4</sup> viz. Christ and the Virgin, who had just ascended from the Triumph.

# CANTO XXVI. THE EIGHTH HEAVEN, OF THE FIXED STARS

St. John  
examines  
Dante on  
Love; God  
the object  
of Love.

Through loss of eyesight I was still in doubt, when from the lustrous flame which quenched it there came forth a voice which claimed mine attention, saying: 'The while thou art regaining the sense of sight, which thou hast extinguished by gazing at me, 'tis well thou shouldst compensate for it by conversing with me. Begin then, and say what is the object of thy soul's desire, and bethink thee that thy visual power is dazed and not destroyed, for the Lady who guides thee through this heavenly realm hath in her looks the power which Ananias' hand possessed <sup>1</sup>.' 'Sooner or later,' I replied, 'according to her good pleasure let mine eyes be cured, which were the gates, when she entered with the fire wherewith I ever burn. The Good which fulfills the desires of this Court, is the Alpha and Omega of every precept, which love either gently or forcibly doth teach me <sup>2</sup>.'

The proofs  
of this.

The same voice which had delivered me from the fear arising from sudden blindness, inspired me with the desire to speak again, and said: 'In sooth by the use of a finer sieve <sup>3</sup> thou must needs explain thy views; it behoves thee to say, who caused thee to aim at such a target <sup>4</sup>.' And I: 'It is by philosophical reasoning, and by authority which descends from here on high, that the love I speak of must impress itself upon me; for that which is good, inasmuch as it is good, when its true nature is perceived doth kindle

<sup>1</sup> Ananias restored St. Paul's sight; Acts ix. 17, 18.

<sup>2</sup> i. e. God is the beginning and the end of all the lessons of love, whether in its lighter or its deeper forms.

<sup>3</sup> In greater detail.

<sup>4</sup> To fix thy affections on God.



love, and that in a higher degree in proportion to its own inherent goodness. Consequently the mind of every one who perceives the truth on which this proof is based<sup>1</sup> cannot fail to be moved in love toward the essence, in which there is such supreme perfection, that every good which is external to it is naught else than a reflection of its light, rather than towards any other essence. This truth is set forth to my intellect by him<sup>2</sup>, who shows me what is the primal object of love to all the eternal substances. It is set forth also by the voice of the truthful Author, who saith to Moses, speaking of Himself, "I will make all good to pass before thee<sup>3</sup>." Thou thyself too dost set it forth, at the beginning of thy sublime announcement<sup>4</sup>, which beyond every other proclamation declares on earth the secret of Heaven.'

Then heard I this: 'By the guidance of human intellect, and of authorities which accord therewith, the highest of thine affections is directed toward God. But tell me further, whether thou art conscious of other inducements which attract thee to Him, so that thou mayst declare how many reasons compel thee to love God.' The holy purpose of Christ's eagle<sup>5</sup> was not obscure; nay, I at once perceived whither he would lead my profession of faith; wherefore I commenced anew: 'All the impulses which avail to turn the heart to God have co-operated to produce my love; for the existence of the world, and mine own existence, the death which He

Influences which tend to produce the love of God.

<sup>1</sup> The principle that God is the highest good.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, who taught that God is the power which attracts all things to itself by their desire for it, and thus causes the movement of the universe.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. xxxiii. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Rev. i. 8, 'I am Alpha and Omega,' &c., where God's goodness is to be inferred from the other attributes ascribed to Him.

<sup>5</sup> The eagle is the emblem of St. John.

endured that I may live, and that which every true believer, like myself, doth hope for, together with the afore-mentioned confident persuasion, have rescued me from the ocean of false love, and set me on the shore of the true. 'The leaves where-with the whole garden of the eternal Gardener is decked<sup>1</sup> I love in proportion to the good gifts which He hath bestowed upon them.' No sooner had I ceased, than a chant of wondrous sweetness resounded through Heaven, and my Lady joined the rest in singing: 'Holy, Holy, Holy.'

The spirit  
of Adam  
appears.

And even as sleep is broken by a flashing light, by reason of the visual power turning toward the brightness which passes from one to another of the coats of the eye; and the awakened spirit shrinks from what it sees, so unconscious is it when suddenly aroused, as long as the faculty of reflexion fails to succour it; so from mine eyes was every mote removed by Beatrice through the effulgence of her own, which shot their beams to infinite distance; whereupon I saw more clearly than before, and in amaze made inquiry concerning a fourth luminary<sup>2</sup>, which I beheld in our company. And my Lady said: 'Within those rays the first soul which the primal Virtue ever created gazes on its Maker.' As a leaf deflects its point while the wind is passing, and anon uplifts itself through its natural force which inclines it upward; so was I overcome with wonder while she was addressing me, and so thereafter was my confidence restored by the desire to speak which fired me; and I began: 'O apple, that alone wast produced full-ripe, O ancient father, to whom every married woman is daughter and daughter-in-law<sup>3</sup>, with the utmost devotion I beseech thee to speak to me; thou knowest what I long for, and in order to hasten thy reply I name it not.'

<sup>1</sup> Mankind are meant.

<sup>2</sup> This is the spirit of Adam.

<sup>3</sup> Because every woman and every man is a descendant of Adam.

At times an animal within a wrapping wriggles in such wise, that its feelings cannot fail to be expressed by the covering following its movements; even so did that first of souls reveal to me through his envelopment<sup>1</sup>, how greatly it delighted him to comply with my request. Then he breathed forth this: 'Albeit thou dost not thyself reveal to me thy wishes, yet I discern them more clearly than thou dost whatever is most certain to thee, inasmuch as I behold them in the truthful mirror, who Himself reflects all things, while none of them reflects Him. Thou wouldst fain know how long time it is since God placed me in the lofty garden<sup>2</sup>, where yonder Dame prepared thee for thy present long ascent; and for what period it was a delight to mine eyes; and what was the true cause of the dire wrath which I incurred; and what the language which I formed and spake. Mark now, my son, the eating of the fruit of the tree was not in itself the cause of that sad banishment, but only the transgression of the appointed limit<sup>3</sup>. From that place<sup>4</sup>, whence thy Lady urged Virgil to come, for four thousand three hundred and two revolutions of the sun I longed for this assembly; and nine hundred and thirty times did I see him return along all the lights of his highway, the while I was on earth. The language which I spake had wholly died out long ere Nimrod's folk were engaged on the work which might never be completed<sup>5</sup>; for by reason of the changes in men's inclinations under the influence of the stars, no product of human reason ever remained permanently the

He answers  
various  
questions  
for Dante.

<sup>1</sup> The enveloping light.

<sup>2</sup> The Earthly Paradise.

<sup>3</sup> The desire of our first parents to be as gods in knowing good and evil; Gen. iii. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Limbo.

<sup>5</sup> The Tower of Babel, which Dante attributed to Nimrod; cp. Inf. xxxi. 77.

same. Human speech is an operation of nature; but whether it takes this or that form, nature leaves it to you to determine afterwards according to your pleasure. Ere I descended to the anguish of Hell, *I*<sup>1</sup> was the name on earth for the Highest Good, from whom proceeds the joy which enfolds me; anon He was called *El*; and such change is meet, for the usage of men is like the leaves on a bough, whereof one goes and another comes. On the Mountain which rises highest from the sea I abode in the innocent and the fallen life from the first hour to that which, when the sun changes quadrants, follows the sixth<sup>2</sup>.

## CANTO XXVII. THE EIGHTH AND NINTH HEAVENS

St. Peter denounces the crimes of the Roman Pontiffs.

‘To the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit glory be,’ all Paradise began to sing, so that the sweet chant inebriated me. Methought what I beheld was a smile of the universe; thus both through the hearing and the sight mine ecstasy found entrance. O joy! O gladness unspeakable! O perfect life of love and peace! O wealth secure, and exempt from longing! Before mine eyes the four torches stood enkindled, and the one which first approached<sup>3</sup> began to display a more vivid light: the aspect it assumed was such as Jove might wear, if he and Mars were birds and exchanged plumage<sup>4</sup>. The providence, which in those

<sup>1</sup> i. e. Jah or Jehovah.

<sup>2</sup> There was a mediaeval tradition to the effect that the duration of Adam’s stay in the Earthly Paradise was seven hours.

<sup>3</sup> St. Peter.

<sup>4</sup> The light which enveloped St. Peter assumed the ruddy hue of the planet Mars; this colour is here intended to betoken indignation.



realms assigns to each his fitting time and function, had imposed silence on the blessed choir on every side, when I heard as follows: 'Marvel not, if I change colour, for while I am speaking thou wilt see all those spirits change colour also. He that on earth usurps my seat <sup>1</sup>, my seat, my seat, which in the sight of the Son of God is vacant, hath turned my burial-place <sup>2</sup> into a sewer of blood and filth, whereat the reprobate <sup>3</sup> who fell from here above rejoices in Hell below.' Then with that hue, wherewith the sun from the opposite quarter tints the clouds at morn and eve, did I see the whole heaven overspread. And as a virtuous lady, while confident in herself, at the mere mention of another's transgression becomes bashful, so did Beatrice change countenance; and the darkness, I ween, was such as veiled the sky, when the Almighty suffered death. Anon with a voice so unlike its natural tone, that the change in his aspect was not greater, he thus continued his speech: 'It was not to serve as an instrument for amassing gold that the spouse of Christ was nurtured with my blood, and with that of Linus and of Cletus <sup>4</sup>; but in order to win this blissful life Sixtus and Pius, Calixtus and Urban, after manifold sufferings shed their blood. It was no purpose of ours, that one part of the Christian folk should sit on the right hand of our successors, and another on the left <sup>5</sup>; or that the keys which were entrusted to me should become an emblem on a banner, to be used in combat against baptized Christians; or that I

<sup>1</sup> Boniface VIII, who owing to his crimes was in the sight of Christ an apostate.

<sup>2</sup> Rome.

<sup>3</sup> Satan.

<sup>4</sup> These, and the other bishops mentioned below, were St. Peter's successors in the See of Rome.

<sup>5</sup> i. e., that the Guelf party should be favoured, and the Ghibelline persecuted, by the Popes.

should serve for a figure on a seal attached to venal and mendacious indulgences, whereat I oftentimes blush and flash with fire. In the garb of shepherds rapacious wolves are seen from here above in all the pastures: ye weapons of God's armoury, wherefore are ye ever at rest? Sons of Cahors and Gascony<sup>1</sup> are preparing to drink of our blood; O fair commencement, in how base downfall art thou doomed to end! But the sublime providence, which by the hands of Scipio<sup>2</sup> maintained for Rome the empire of the world, will speedily, as I conceive, afford relief. And do thou, my son, who by reason of the burden of the flesh shalt return again to earth, open thy lips, and conceal not that which I do not conceal.'

Dante again  
looks down  
to earth.

As with congealed vapours our atmosphere falls in flakes, what time the horn of the heavenly Goat is in conjunction with the sun<sup>3</sup>, so did I see the sky aloft richly dight, and flaked with triumphant vapours<sup>4</sup>, which had there sojourned in our company. Mine eyes were pursuing their forms, and still pursued them, until the vastness of the intervening space prevented them from penetrating further. Whereupon my Lady, who was ware that my task of gazing upward was at an end, said to me: 'Turn thy looks downward, and see how far thou hast gone round.' Since the time<sup>5</sup> when I

<sup>1</sup> John XXII and Clement V, with their adherents.

<sup>2</sup> Scipio Africanus, the conqueror of Hannibal.

<sup>3</sup> In mid-winter, when the sun is in Capricorn.

<sup>4</sup> The spirits which formed the Triumph of Christ, now ascending to the Empyrean.

<sup>5</sup> In what follows it is described how Dante, who was in the constellation of Gemini, and had already looked down to the earth in the longitude of Jerusalem (Par. xxii. 151-4), had passed across to the longitude of Gades, and thence beheld to the west the Atlantic Ocean, and to the east the Mediterranean almost as far as the coast of Phœnicia.

before had looked, I perceived that I had traversed the entire arc, which the first clime forms from its mid-point to its end; so that on the further side of Gades I beheld the scene of Ulysses' mad voyage<sup>1</sup>, and on the hither side I wellnigh saw the shore, on which Europa became a sweet burden<sup>2</sup>. And yet more of the surface of our plot of ground would have been revealed to me; but the sun was passing onward beneath my feet at the distance of more than a sign of the zodiac from me. My enamoured spirit, which ever dallies with my Lady, was more eager than before to recall mine eyes to her: and if nature or art prepared a banquet of delights, whether in the form of human flesh or in pictures thereof, to captivate the eyes and so possess the mind, all these combined would seem as naught in comparison of the divine charm which beamed upon me, when I turned toward her smiling face; and the power which her look bestowed upon me snatched me away from the fair nest of Leda<sup>3</sup>, and bore me on to the Heaven of swiftest motion<sup>4</sup>.

Its parts, lofty as they are and exceeding full of life, are so uniform, that which of them Beatrice selected for my station I cannot say: but perceiving my desire, with a smile so glad, that the joy of God Himself seemed to beam in her countenance, she thus began to speak: 'The nature of the universe, which causes the central point<sup>5</sup> to be at rest, and all the other parts to move around, begins from here as from its starting-point: and this Heaven hath no other place than in the mind of God, where the love which causes it to revolve and the influence which it imparts originate. Light and love

The ninth  
or Crystal-  
line Heaven,  
the *Primum*  
*Mobile*.

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Inf. xxvi, 125.

<sup>2</sup> Jupiter in the form of a bull carried off Europa from the Phœnician coast.

<sup>3</sup> Gemini.

<sup>4</sup> The *Primum Mobile*.

<sup>5</sup> The earth.

form a sphere encircling it, even as this sphere encircles the other spheres; and over that circle He alone who embraces it presides. The motion of this sphere is not determined by any other; nay, by this one the other spheres are measured, even as ten is by its half and by its fifth<sup>1</sup>. Now mayst thou clearly see, that in this sphere, like a plant in a flower-pot, time hath its roots, and in the others its leaves<sup>2</sup>. O covetousness, how in thy depths dost thou submerge mankind, so that none hath strength to lift his eyes from beneath thy waters<sup>3</sup>! The will in man puts forth fair flowers, but by the unceasing rainfall the sound fruit is blasted. Only in the very young are faith and innocence found; anon, ere their cheeks are bearded, both of these depart. One, who while a lisping child observes the fasts, anon when his tongue is fluent eats greedily any kind of food in any season; another, who while a lisping child loves and obeys his mother, anon when his speech is perfect desires to see her buried. So doth the fair skin of the beauteous daughter of him who brings morning and leaves evening grow dark as soon as seen<sup>4</sup>. That this may not seem strange to thee, bethink thee that on earth there is none who rules, and thus the human race doth go astray. But ere January passes wholly out of winter into spring by reason of the neglect of the hundredth part of a day in the world below<sup>5</sup>, these spheres on high will roar so

<sup>1</sup> Two and five when multiplied together, make ten; this is given as a specimen of perfect measurement.

<sup>2</sup> Distinctions of time originate in the *Primum Mobile*, but are visibly revealed in the sun and the planets.

<sup>3</sup> Beatrice here denounces the mean interests, which blind men to the sublime verities.

<sup>4</sup> Human nature, which is the child of the sun, degenerates from the first.

<sup>5</sup> The reference is to the growing error in excess in the reckoning of



loudly, that the long expected good fortune will turn round the sterns where are now the prows, so that the fleet shall follow a straight course; and the flower shall be succeeded by healthy fruit<sup>1</sup>.

CANTO XXVIII. THE NINTH HEAVEN,  
OR *PRIMUM MOBILE*

When she who lifts my mind to the joys of Paradise, by denouncing the present life of wretched mortality had revealed to me the truth, anon, as in a mirror a taper's flame is seen by one who is lighted by it from behind, or ever it presents itself to his eyes or his thoughts, whereupon he turns him round to see whether the glass tells him true, and finds that it corresponds as faithfully thereto as a tune to the metre of its verse, such—as my memory testifies—was the case with me, as I gazed at the beauteous eyes, which became the noose that Love spun to ensnare me<sup>2</sup>. And when I turned round, and mine eyes were smitten by what is visible in that sphere, when it is rightly regarded in respect of its rotation, I beheld a point<sup>3</sup>, which emitted a light so keen, that the eyes which it illuminates must perforce close by reason of its piercing brightness; and the star which from the earth appears the smallest of all would seem a moon, if placed by the side of this point as one star is placed by another star. As closely,

The point  
of light and  
the nine  
circles.

the Julian calendar, by which January was being advanced toward the end of winter and the beginning of spring. The meaning is—'before a very long time has elapsed.'

<sup>1</sup> Beatrice here anticipates the coming of a regenerator of society.

<sup>2</sup> Dante saw a bright light reflected in the eyes of Beatrice.

<sup>3</sup> The point, being indivisible, is taken to represent the Unity of the Godhead.

maybe, as the halo seems to surround the luminary which furnishes its light, when the vapour whereon it is formed is densest, around the point<sup>1</sup> a fiery circle was revolving with rapidity so great, that it would have outstripped the motion which most swiftly encompasses the universe<sup>2</sup>; and this circle was enclosed by a second, and that by the third, and anon the third by the fourth, and the fourth by the fifth, and then the fifth by the sixth. Without these followed the seventh, which had reached so ample a width, that Juno's messenger<sup>3</sup>, were its circle perfect, would be too narrow to contain it. In like manner the eighth and ninth; and each of them was slower in movement according as its number was more distant from the point of Unity: and the flame of that one was the clearest, from which the pure spark was least remote; methinks because it partakes most of its perfection. My Lady, who saw that I was absorbed in anxious thought, said: 'On that point both Heaven and all Nature depend. Regard that circle which is nearest to it, and know that the cause of its velocity is the ardent love whereby it is impelled.'

Correspondence of these circles with the material spheres.

And I to her: 'If the system of the universe corresponded to the order which I behold in those circles, the food that is set before me would have contented me; but in the world of sense the spheres are seen to partake more largely of the divine influence, in proportion as they are more distant from their centre: wherefore, if my desire is to be appeased in this wondrous temple of the angels, which hath no other limit save

<sup>1</sup> The nine concentric circles of light, which revolve round the point, are the nine angelic Orders, which are the Intelligences who guide the spheres. Their names are 1. Seraphim; 2. Cherubim; 3. Thrones; 4. Dominions; 5. Virtues; 6. Powers; 7. Principalities; 8. Archangels; 9. Angels.

<sup>2</sup> The *Primum Mobile*.

<sup>3</sup> Iris, or the rainbow.

light and love, I must needs be further told how it comes to pass that the original and the copy do not accord, for of myself I investigate this in vain <sup>1</sup>. 'It is no marvel if thy fingers are incapable of disentangling such a knot, so hard it hath become through lack of trying.' Thus spake my Lady; and then she said: 'If thou wouldst fain be satisfied, accept what I shall tell thee, and exercise thy subtlety upon it. The material spheres are wide or narrow according to the amount of the divine power, which is diffused through every part of them. A greater amount of the power produces greater salutary influence; and greater salutary influence is contained in a larger body, if it be equally perfect in all its parts. Consequently that sphere <sup>2</sup>, which bears along with it all the rest of the universe, corresponds to the circle <sup>3</sup> which hath the fullest love and fullest knowledge. Hence, if thou appliest thy estimate, not to the circular form in which the angelic natures are revealed to thee, but to the power which they possess, thou wilt discover that each sphere corresponds exactly to the Intelligences which guide it, the wider sphere to the superior, the narrower to the inferior Order.'

As, when from his mildest quarter Boreas breathes, the vault of Heaven remains bright and clear, since the rack whereby erewhile it was overcast clears off and disperses, so

The Orders  
and Hierar-  
chies of  
Angels.

<sup>1</sup> The difficulty is this:—The material spheres of Heaven revolve more swiftly in proportion to their distance from their centre, the earth; now, as the Angelic circles are the prototype of those spheres, we should expect to find that they revolve more swiftly in proportion to their distance from their centre, God: but in reality the contrary of this is the case. The answer is, that what the Angelic circles are to be estimated by is the rank and relative power of the spirits which compose them; and thus each material Heaven corresponds to the Order of Intelligences which guides it, the wider and swifter sphere to the superior, the narrower and slower to the inferior power.

<sup>2</sup> The *Primum Mobile*.

<sup>3</sup> That of the Seraphim.

that with the lustre of its full pageantry the sky doth smile ; so was it with me, when my Lady had furnished me with her clear reply, and the truth was seen as distinctly as a star in the heavens. And as soon as she ceased from speaking, the circles coruscated like the sparkling of molten iron. The sparks accompanied each its own burning train ; and so many were they, that their number runs into more thousands than the doubling of the chess <sup>1</sup>. I heard them sing Hosanna choir by choir to the fixed point, which holds and will for ever hold them fast to the place in which they ever were. And she who was ware of the questionings in my mind, said : ‘The first two circles have revealed to thee the Seraphim and Cherubim. With the speed which thou perceivest they follow their bonds <sup>2</sup>, to assimilate themselves to the point as far as in them lies, and that is in proportion to the sublimity of their sight. The other loving spirits which move around them are called Thrones of the face of God ; and thus they completed <sup>3</sup> the first group of three. And be it known to thee, that the joy which they all feel is in proportion to the depth of their insight into the Truth, wherein every spirit finds repose. Hence it is clear that the state of beatitude consists in the act of seeing, not in that of loving, which is subsequent ; and the power of sight is determined by merit, which arises from grace and goodwill ; such are the steps of the development. The second group of three, which similarly germinates in this eternal spring, which no autumn season

<sup>1</sup> By doubling a grain of wheat as many times as there are squares on a chess-board—that is, one grain for the first square, two for the second, four for the third, and so on to sixty-four—an almost incalculable number is obtained.

<sup>2</sup> The attraction of love.

<sup>3</sup> The past tense is used, because the period of their creation is referred to.



strips of its leaves, doth evermore warble Hosanna in three strains, which proceed from the three glad Orders whereof its triple nature is composed. In this Hierarchy are the following three divinities ; to wit, first Dominions, and then Virtues, while the Powers constitute the third Order. After them in the two gyrations which precede the last Principalities and Archangels revolve ; festive Angels alone compose the last. These Orders all gaze upwards, and exercise their influence below in such wise that, while they are all attracted toward God, they all attract those beneath them. To the study of these Orders Dionysius <sup>1</sup> applied himself with so great longing, that he named them and arranged them as I have done. After him Gregory maintained a different view <sup>2</sup> ; and so it came to pass that, when he opened his eyes in this Heaven, he smiled at his mistake. And if so great a mystery was revealed by a mortal man on earth, prithee marvel not ; for this truth, and others manifold concerning these spheres, were made known to him by one who beheld them here above <sup>3</sup>.

## CANTO XXIX. THE NINTH HEAVEN, OR *PRIMUM MOBILE*

When Latona's twin offspring <sup>4</sup>, surmounted by the Ram and by the Scales, are girdled at once by the horizon, as long

<sup>1</sup> Dionysius the Areopagite, the convert of St. Paul at Athens, was the reputed author of the *De Caelesti Hierarchia*, which was the textbook of angelic lore in the middle ages.

<sup>2</sup> St. Gregory placed the Principalities in the second Hierarchy, and the Virtues in the third.

<sup>3</sup> By St. Paul, who was caught up to the third Heaven ; 2 Cor. xii. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Apollo and Diana, i.e. the sun and moon. Beatrice now ceases from speaking for an instant, and the instantaneous character of this pause is illustrated by the correspondence in position of the setting sun and the rising full moon at the equinox, which can only be momentary.

Questions  
relating to  
the Angels;  
their crea-  
tion.

as is the time which elapses from the moment when the zenith makes an equipoise between them, until, changing their hemispheres, they both escape from that cincture, so long, with her countenance irradiated by a smile, did Beatrice hold her peace, gazing fixedly at the point which had overpowered me. Anon she thus began: 'That which thou fain wouldst hear I tell thee without inquiring of thee, inasmuch as I have seen it there<sup>1</sup>, where all time and every place are present. Not with a view to the acquisition of good for Himself, for that cannot be, but in order that His glory by being manifested in other beings might be able to proclaim its existence, in His eternity beyond the bounds of time and beyond every other limit, according to His good pleasure the eternal Love manifested Himself in nine loves<sup>2</sup>. Not that ere this God lay as it were inactive; for neither before nor after aught else did the movement of the Spirit of God on the face of these waters take place. Form and matter, both in combination and uncombined<sup>3</sup>, came forth into perfect being like three arrows shot from a three-stringed bow<sup>4</sup>; and as on glass, on amber, or on crystal a ray no sooner falls than it illuminates them throughout, so did the threefold result beam forth simultaneously from its Lord in completeness of its being without any distinction of time in their commencement. The order of these substances was created and ordained along with them, and those were the crown of the universe, in which pure intellect was produced. Pure receptivity held the lowest place; between these was

<sup>1</sup> In the face of God.

<sup>2</sup> The nine angelic Orders.

<sup>3</sup> By 'form' intellect is meant. Pure form is the angelic nature. Pure matter is the material universe. Form and matter combined is the human race.

<sup>4</sup> The three strings represent the three Persons of the Trinity.

receptivity combined with intellect, and these were held together by a bond so powerful that it can never be unbound. In Jerome's writings you will find it said of the Angels, that they were created long ages before the rest of the universe was made; but the truth which I affirm<sup>1</sup> is recorded in manifold passages by the inspired writers, as thou wilt discover if thou givest good heed; and reason also in a measure perceives it, for it would not allow that the Intelligences which move the spheres could lack so long the perfection of their being<sup>2</sup>. Now thou knowest where and when these loving spirits were created, and in what fashion; so that already three of thine ardent desires are appeased.

‘Moreover, ere in counting one could reach twenty, a part of the Angels disturbed the nethermost of your elements<sup>3</sup>. The other part remained, and commenced the practice of this art which thou beholdest; and that with so great delight, that they never cease from revolving. The origin of that Fall was the accursed pride of him, whom thou sawest compressed by the gravity of the whole universe. Those whom thou seest here were humble in recognizing that they proceeded from the Goodness which had created them qualified for so great intelligence; wherefore their power of sight was sublimated by illuminative grace and by their merit, so that their wills are perfect and immutable. And I would have thee believe undoubtingly, that to accept grace is a meritorious act in proportion to the receptivity of the affection.

The rebellious and the faithful Angels.

<sup>1</sup> viz. the simultaneous creation of the Angels and the rest of the universe.

<sup>2</sup> The office of the angelic Intelligences was to move and guide the spheres; this would have been purposeless while the spheres did not yet exist.

<sup>3</sup> The earth, which was disturbed by Lucifer's fall; cp. Inf. xxxiv. 121-6.

Now without further aid thou mayst fully devote thy thoughts to the subject of this assembly, if thou hast laid to heart my words.

The faculties of the Angels; perverse views of spiritual subjects.

‘ But seeing that on earth it is taught in your schools that the angelic nature possesses intelligence and memory and will, I will pursue my discourse, that thou mayst see clearly the truth which there below men confuse, equivocating in such prelections. These spirits<sup>1</sup>, from what time they were blest with the sight of God, withdrew not their eyes from His face from which naught is hidden; wherefore their vision is intercepted by no fresh object, and thus they need not recollection to recall a thought which hath been excluded from view: so that on earth men dream with their eyes open, some believing that they speak the truth, some not; but the latter incur greater sin and greater disgrace. Ye below in your philosophizing follow not the one right way, so greatly are ye carried away by the love of display and by pondering thereon. Yet here in Heaven even this is borne with less indignation than the neglect or the perversion of Holy Writ. On earth men reflect not on the amount of blood that hath been the price of disseminating it in the world, or how acceptable to God is he who in humility holds fast by it. Display is what each one aims at, inventing new views of his own; and these are the preachers’ themes, while the Gospel is not mentioned. One says that at the time of Christ’s passion the moon returned on its course and came between, and this was why the sun shed not its light below; another, that the light disappeared of itself, and therefore the Spaniards and the Indians, equally with the Jews, were affected by this eclipse. There are not in Florence so many Lapi and Bindì<sup>2</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> Dante here maintains that the Angels have no need of memory, because they forget nothing.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Common men’ are meant.



as are the fictions of this character which in the course of a year are proclaimed in the pulpit from one side or the other ; so that the poor silly sheep return from their pasture fed with wind, yet are not excused by ignorance of their bane. Christ said not to his first band of followers : " Go forth and preach frivolities to the world," but gave them a sure foundation of truth ; and that alone proceeded from their lips, so that for their combat in propagating the Faith the Gospel served them for shield and spear. Nowadays with witticisms and buffooneries men essay to preach, and if so be a good laugh is raised, the preacher's cowl is puffed up, and more than that he asks not. Yet in the angle of the cowl such a winged monster <sup>1</sup> nestles, that the multitude, could they see it, would learn the value of the indulgences wherein they put their trust ; by reason of which such folly prevails on earth, that without any evidence of their authorization men are ready to rush together at every promise of them. On this St. Antony fattens his pig, and others withal who are more foul than swine, making his payments in uncoined money <sup>2</sup>.

' But seeing that our digression hath been full long, return now in thought to the subject which I was pursuing, that my statement may be brief to suit the allotted time. The angelic nature is so vastly multiplied in number, that it exceeds all power of expression and thought of man ; and if thou regardest aright what Daniel reveals, thou wilt see that when he speaks of thousands no fixed number is expressed <sup>3</sup>. The primal Light, which irradiates it throughout, is received into it in as many modes as are the bright beings wherewith it is

Their  
number and  
degrees of  
grace.

<sup>1</sup> The devil.

<sup>2</sup> i. e. unauthorized indulgences.

<sup>3</sup> Dan. vii. 10, ' Thousand thousands ministered unto him,' &c. This only means an indefinitely great number.

mated; whence, inasmuch as the affection is in proportion to the assimilation of that light, the sweetness of love is more or less warm in it in different degrees. Now canst thou understand the sublimity and the immensity of the eternal Might, since He hath created so many mirrors which partake of His light, while Himself retaining unchanged His unity.'

### CANTO XXX. THE TENTH, OR EMPYREAN HEAVEN

Disappear-  
ance of the  
heavenly  
host.

Six thousand miles <sup>1</sup>, maybe, the glowing hour of noon is distant from us, and our world now inclines its shadow well nigh to a level, when the mid-heaven high above us is gathering so much light, that here and there a star is lost to sight on earth below; and as the brightest handmaid of the sun advances, the heaven closes, light after light even to the most beautiful: in such wise the triumphant host, which ever joyfully revolves around the point that overpowered me, which seems to be enclosed by that which it encloses, gradually faded from my gaze; so that through the disappearance of that sight, and withal through love, mine eyes must fain revert to Beatrice. If all her praises that have hitherto been sung were gathered up into a single eulogy, it would be inadequate to furnish forth this occasion. Not only doth the beauty which I beheld pass the limits of our conception, but verily I believe that her Creator alone hath full enjoyment of it. By this hard task I confess myself vanquished, more than

<sup>1</sup> The nine angelic circles now gradually fade from Dante's sight; this is compared to the gradual disappearance of the stars at dawn, which is described by an elaborate periphrasis.

comic or tragic poet ever was by a difficulty in his subject ; for, even as weak eyes are overpowered by the sun, so by the recollection of that sweet smile is my mind paralysed. From the first day when I beheld her face in this life until the present view my song hath not been hindered from pursuing that theme ; but now I must desist from the attempt to express her beauty in my verse, as every artist must desist from pursuing his ideal.

With that sublimity, which I leave to a loftier heralding than that of my trumpet which is bringing to a close its arduous task, and with the look and voice of a thoughtful guide, she thus once more began : ‘ We have passed forth from the most spacious of the material Heavens into that which is pure light <sup>1</sup>—light intellectual replete with love, love of the true good replete with joy, joy which surpasses all else in sweetness. Here shalt thou see both one and the other of the hosts of Paradise <sup>2</sup>, and the one wearing that aspect which at the final Judgement thou shalt behold <sup>3</sup>.’ Even as a sudden lightning-flash annuls the power of sight, so that it deprives the eye of the impression of more striking objects ; so did there gleam around me a vivid light, which left me so enfolded in its lustrous veil that I saw naught beyond. ‘ Such is the greeting wherewith the Love which tranquillizes this Heaven doth ever receive a soul into its presence, to prepare the taper to be lighted by its flame.’ No sooner had these brief words reached mine ears, than I was ware that I rose above the level of my powers ; and a new faculty of sight of such keenness was enkindled in me, that no lustre is so clear that

The tenth or  
Empyrean  
Heaven ;  
symbolical  
intimation  
of it.

• <sup>1</sup> From the *Primum Mobile* into the Empyrean.

<sup>2</sup> The company of the Angels and the company of the Blessed.

<sup>3</sup> The Blessed would be seen in their real form, not concealed by the enveloping light.

mine eyes would not have endured it: and I beheld <sup>1</sup> a light, in form like unto a river, gleaming with brightness, between two banks adorned with a wondrous wealth of flowers. From out this stream there proceeded living sparks, which settled on the flowers on either hand, resembling rubies set in gold. Anon, as if inebriated by the odours, they plunged again into the marvellous torrent, and as one passed in another issued forth.

The full  
revelation.

‘The exalted longing to have cognizance of what thou seest, which now stimulates and impels thee, is the more pleasing to me in proportion as it increases; but thou must needs drink of this water, ere thy eager thirst can be quenched’: thus did the sun of mine eyes address me. Furthermore she added: ‘The river and the topaz-lights which pass in and out, and the smiling flowers, are shadowy anticipations of their reality; not that in themselves these things are hard to understand, but the defect is on thy part, for thy range of sight is as yet too limited.’ Never did infant so suddenly turn its face toward its mother’s breast, if it chanced to wake long after its wonted time, as I turned mine, to increase still more my power of vision, bending downward to the water, which issues forth that men may therein be perfected. And so soon as the rim of mine eyelids had drunk thereof, I perceived that from having been long it had become round. Anon, as folk disguised by masks wear a different aspect, if they put off the alien semblance whereby they were concealed, so did the flowers and the sparks change into more radiant sights of joy, and I beheld both the courts of heaven displayed to view.

<sup>1</sup> This is a symbolical representation of what is to follow. The river is the illuminative grace of God, the sparks are the Angels, and the flowers the Blessed.



O splendour divine, in the strength of which I saw the sublime triumph of the truthful kingdom, grant me the power to describe how I beheld it. In Heaven above there is light, which reveals the Creator to every creature that finds its peace in the sight of Him alone; and this extends in a circular form so widely, that its circumference would be a more than ample cincture for the sun. All that is thus displayed is formed of a ray reflected on the surface of the Heaven of First Motion<sup>1</sup>, which derives therefrom its vitality and its influence. And as a hill-side reflects itself in water at its foot, as if to behold its bravery, when it is rich in verdure and flowers, so saw I reflected in that light, as they rose above it all round in more than a thousand tiers, all the souls that have returned from earth to Heaven. And if the lowest tier bounds so great an expanse of light, how vast must be that rose in its outermost petals! In surveying its width and height my sight was not at fault, but embraced all the immensity and the quality of that blessedness. There naught is added by nearness or excluded by distance, for where God immediately rules the law of Nature<sup>2</sup> hath no force.

The celestial Rose.

Into the yellow centre of the everlasting rose<sup>3</sup>, which opens out, and descends in gradation, and breathes forth the fragrance of praise to the Sun of the eternal springtide, Beatrice drew me, like one that is silent though he fain would speak; and she said: 'Behold the white-robed assembly, how vast it is! Behold our city, how wide is its circuit! See how our benches are so occupied, that now to fill them but few are needed. On that grand seat, whereto thine eyes

The seat reserved for Henry of Luxemburg.

<sup>1</sup> i. e. on the outer surface of the *Primum Mobile*.

<sup>2</sup> The law of perspective is meant.

<sup>3</sup> The sea of light, which is the reflexion of God's glory, is compared to the yellow centre formed by the stamens of the rose.

are attracted by the crown which is already set above it, ere thou shalt partake of this marriage supper a soul shall sit, which on earth shall bear the imperial dignity; even the soul of the great Henry<sup>1</sup>, who shall come to reform Italy before it is prepared. The blind covetousness which bewitches you hath made you like the child which, when dying of hunger, drives away its nurse; and in the divine court such an one will then be president<sup>2</sup>, that both openly and covertly he will follow a different road from him<sup>3</sup>. But not for long thereafter will God tolerate him in his sacred office; for he shall be thrust down there where Simon Magus is for his deserts<sup>4</sup>, and will cause him of Anagni<sup>5</sup> to sink lower still.

## CANTO XXXI. THE EMPYREAN HEAVEN

The Angels  
and the  
Blessed.

Thus in the form of a white rose was the saintly host revealed to me, which Christ espoused with His blood; but the other host<sup>6</sup>, which, as it flies, beholds and celebrates in song the glory of Him who inspires it with love, and His goodness which created it so excellent, like a crowd of bees, which one while settle on the flowers, and anon return to the place<sup>7</sup> where their labour is converted into sweetness, descended on the great flower which is adorned with so many petals, and rose again from off it to the region where its Love doth ever dwell. The faces of all of them were like

<sup>1</sup> Henry of Luxemburg.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Clement V, whose double-dealing with Henry has already been noticed; Par. xvii. 82.

<sup>3</sup> i. e. will oppose him.

<sup>4</sup> In the third *bolgia* of Malebolge; Inf. xix. 82-4.

<sup>5</sup> Boniface VIII.

<sup>6</sup> The Angels.

<sup>7</sup> The hive.

living flame, and their wings like gold, and the rest so white, that the purest snow attains not such perfection. When they descended on the flower, from tier to tier they communicated the peace and the fervour which they acquired by waving their wings. Nor did the interposition of so great a multitude of flying creatures between the flower and that which was above impede the sight of the splendour, for the light divine pervades the universe in proportion to its receptivity, so that naught can interrupt it. This realm of safety and of blessedness, peopled by folk of the Old and the New Dispensation, had its looks and its love fixed on one object alone. O Trinal light, that, glistening upon their eyes in a single star<sup>2</sup>, dost so content them, look down on our tempestuous life here on earth.

If the barbarians, coming from that clime<sup>3</sup> where Helice<sup>4</sup> Dante's stupefaction. is ever high in the heavens, revolving in company with her son whom she loves, were amazed at the sight of Rome and its lofty edifices, what time the Lateran surpassed all mortal things<sup>5</sup>; with what amazement, think you, was I filled, who from human life had come to the divine, from time unto eternity, and from Florence to a just and upright people! In sooth, what with the stupefaction and the joy, I was well pleased to hear nothing and to remain speechless. And like a pilgrim, who rejoices in gazing at the temple of his vow, and hopes ere long to describe to others its appearance, so, traversing with mine eyes the living light, I let them range

<sup>1</sup> By flying upwards to God.

<sup>2</sup> The Divine Unity.

<sup>3</sup> The North.

<sup>4</sup> A nymph who was placed in heaven as the constellation of the Great Bear, while her son was made the constellation of Bootes.

<sup>5</sup> The time of the barbarian invasions is probably meant, when the Lateran palace had become the Papal residence, and the basilica of St. John Lateran was the grandest existing Christian church.

over the tiers, now up, now down, and now revolving round. Countenances I beheld persuasive to love, decked with Another's light and their own smiles, and gestures graced with every form of seemliness.

Beatrice  
leaves him,  
and St.  
Bernard  
becomes  
his guide.

The general form of Paradise mine eye had fully comprehended, though as yet it had rested nowhere; and with freshly enkindled longing I turned me to my Lady, to question her on subjects which held my mind in doubt. One thing was in my thoughts, and another met my glance; I thought to see Beatrice, but what I beheld was an old man robed like the glorious folk. With benign joy his eyes and cheeks were overspread, and his affectionate look was such as beseems a tender father. Then suddenly I said: 'Where is she?' And he: 'To conduct thee to the desired end Beatrice bade me quit my station; and if thou raisest thine eyes to the third circle counting from the highest tier, thou wilt recognize her on the throne which her merits have allotted to her.' Without replying I looked aloft, and beheld her wearing a crown formed by the eternal rays which she reflected from her. The region of the sky where the highest thunders roll is not so far removed from that man's eye, who suffers himself to sink into the ocean's lowest depths, as Beatrice there was distant from my sight; but this affected me not, for her likeness, as it reached me below, was obscured by no medium. 'O Lady, in whom is the strength of my confidence, and who for my salvation didst endure to leave in Hell thy footprints, to thy might and thy goodness I ascribe the grace and power, which have enabled me to see all the objects that have met mine eye. Thou hast led me forth from bondage into liberty by all the ways, by all the means, whereof to that end thou couldst avail thyself. This gift of thy bounty do thou assure to me,



so that my soul which thou hast restored to soundness may quit its mortal frame acceptably to thee.' Such was my prayer; and she from so far away, as it seemed, regarded me with a smile; anon she turned her to the eternal fountain.

Then spake the aged Saint: 'In order that thou mayst accomplish thy journey perfectly, to which end I was sent hither by prayers and holy love, let thine eyes range over this garden, for the sight of it will enable thy looks to mount higher along the divine ray. And the Queen of Heaven, with love for whom I am all on fire, will bestow on thee a full measure of grace thereto, seeing that I am her loyal Bernard.' As are his feelings, who, haply from Croatia, comes for the sight of our Veronica<sup>1</sup>, and by reason of its ancient fame cannot look his fill, but saith to himself the while it is exhibited: 'Lord Jesu Christ, who art very God, say, was this the likeness of thy countenance?' such were mine, as I regarded that fervent, loving spirit, who through contemplation tasted in this world the peace of Heaven. 'Child of grace,' he began, 'this joyous life will not be known to thee, if to these lower tiers thou dost restrict thy view; nay, scan the others even to the most distant, so that thou mayst see where sits the Queen, whom this realm doth devotedly obey.' I looked aloft; and as at morn the eastern horizon surpasses that where the sun declines, so, rising as it were from vale to mountain-top, mine eyes beheld a portion of the utmost verge exceeding in brightness all else that faced me. And as at the point, where the car which Phaëthon guided amiss<sup>2</sup> will soon appear, the

The glory  
of the  
Blessed  
Virgin.

<sup>1</sup> The likeness of our Lord's face, which according to the story was impressed on a napkin or handkerchief, which was presented to Him that He might wipe the sweat from His face, when He was on the way to crucifixion.

<sup>2</sup> The sun.

brilliancy increases, while on either side of it the light diminishes; so did that oriflamme of peace<sup>1</sup> display a brighter glow at its mid-point, and on either hand the lustre lessened correspondingly. And at that mid-point I saw more than a thousand Angels exulting on outspread wings, each differing from the other in radiance and in forms of joy. There I beheld smiling on their sports and songs a loveliness, which gladdened the eyes of all the other Saints; and even if my wealth of language equalled my imaginative power, I would not dare attempt to express the least particle of its delight. Bernard, so soon as he saw that mine eyes were riveted on the object of his burning love, turned toward her his own with so great devotion, that mine thereby became more eager to gaze.

## CANTO XXXII. THE EMPYREAN HEAVEN

The  
arrange-  
ment of the  
Blessed in  
the celestial  
Rose.

While still absorbed in his delight, that contemplative spirit assumed spontaneously the office of instructor, and commenced these holy words<sup>2</sup>: 'The wound which Mary closed and healed, was inflicted and aggravated by that

<sup>1</sup> The oriflamme was the warlike banner of the French kings. What is here meant is the part of Heaven in which the Virgin was, and she herself is the 'mid-point.'

<sup>2</sup> The description which St. Bernard here gives of the grouping of the saints in the Celestial Rose is as follows. The tiers of seats which compose it are divided vertically into two halves by two lines running downwards opposite to one another from the highest tier to the sea of light. These lines are formed by the most eminent saints, who are seated one below the other, those on one side being female, those on the other male saints. The two portions of the entire area which are thus divided from one another are occupied in their upper part by the saints of the Old and of the New Testament respectively; but the lower part is devoted to the innocent children who were beatified.

Dame<sup>1</sup>, who sits in so great beauty at her feet. Beneath her again, in the line formed by the third tier, Rachel is seated in company with Beatrice, as thou seest. Sarah, Rebecca, Judith, and her<sup>2</sup> who was great-grandmother to the singer who in penitential sorrow said, "Have mercy upon me," thou mayst see descending in gradation from row to row, as clearly as do I, who pass down along the rose from leaf to leaf, assigning to each her rightful name. And from the seventh grade downward, even as above it, Hebrew women follow in order, dividing all the tresses of the flower; because they form the wall of partition between the rows of saints according to the aspect of their faith in Christ. On this side, where the flower is complete in all its leaves<sup>3</sup>, are seated those who believed in Christ before His coming; on the other side, where the semicircular tiers are interrupted by vacant spaces, are stationed those, whose eyes were turned to Christ after His coming. And as here the glorious seat of the Lady of Heaven and the other seats below her form that marked division, so in the opposite direction doth the seat of the great John, who in unfailing saintliness endured the wilderness and martyrdom, and thereafter Hell for the space of two years<sup>4</sup>; and beneath him in like manner Francis, Benedict and Augustine, and others from one circle to another down to this lowest range, were appointed to form the boundary line. Now mark the sublimity of God's providence, in that the one and the other aspect of the faith shall

<sup>1</sup> Eve, whose sin was the cause of the curse, which was removed when the Virgin gave birth to the Saviour.

<sup>2</sup> Ruth.

<sup>3</sup> Because the number of the saints of the Old Dispensation was complete.

<sup>4</sup> He was in Limbo during the two years which elapsed between his death and that of Christ.

equally furnish forth this garden. Know too, that downward from the tier, which in the middle of the area cuts across the two dividing lines, the seats are assigned for no merit of their occupants, but for that of others, under certain conditions; for all these are spirits who were freed from the flesh ere they possessed true power of choice. This thou canst clearly perceive from their faces, and withal from their infant voices, if thou dost duly regard and listen to them.

The spirits  
of infants in  
Heaven.

‘Now thou art in doubt<sup>1</sup>, and notwithstanding that doubt dost hold thy peace; but I will relieve thee from the grievous bonds within which thy perplexing thoughts constrain thee. Within this boundless realm a thing of chance can no more find place than grief or hunger or thirst; for all that thou seest is ordained by an eternal law, so that here the ring exactly fits the finger: and therefore this folk, who were called before their time to the true life, are not without reason some in higher, some in lower grades. The Sovereign, through whom this kingdom doth repose in so great love and joy that no desire can aspire beyond, while He creates all souls in the light of His countenance, of His good pleasure endows them with different degrees of grace; and in this matter let the fact suffice. This truth is expressly and clearly indicated to you in Holy Writ in the case of those twins who struggled together in their mother’s womb<sup>2</sup>. Wherefore it is fit and proper that the beatitude of Heaven should crown their heads in proportion to the measure of the grace bestowed on them at their birth. Consequently, though devoid of merit accruing from their lives, they are placed in

<sup>1</sup> The doubt in Dante’s mind is this:—If these infants were saved by no merit of their own, how comes it that they have different degrees of blessedness?

<sup>2</sup> Esau and Jacob; cp. Rom. ix. 10-12.



different tiers, solely by reason of the difference in their innate power of vision. Now in the early ages of the world the faith of their parents, combined with their own innocence, was sufficient by itself for their salvation; after the close of the primitive period it was ordained for the male children that their innocent wings should be empowered by the rite of circumcision; but when the time of grace arrived, those innocents who received not perfect Christian baptism were consigned below. Now fix thine eyes on the face which is most like to Christ, for naught else than its brightness can dispose thee aright to look on Christ.'

Over her I saw outpoured so great joy, borne by the holy spirits<sup>1</sup> which were created to wing their way through that high Heaven, that naught which I before had seen rapt me so greatly with admiration, or displayed so great likeness to God. The love which first descended upon her<sup>2</sup> outspread his wings before her, singing: 'Hail, Mary, thou that art endued with grace'; and to that divine song the assembly of the Blessed responded on every side, so that the bliss on all their faces was enhanced thereby. 'O holy Father, who for my-sake dost endure to abide here below, leaving the sweet place where by eternal appointment thou sittest; who is the Angel, that regards with such glee the eyes of our Queen, so impassioned that his looks are all afire?' Thus once more I betook me for instruction to him, who was gathering beauty from the face of Mary, as the morning star doth from the sun. And he to me: 'The highest confidence, the brightest grace of movement, that can exist in Angel or in spirit, is found in him; and this is pleasing to us, for he it was who

The position  
of the most  
eminent  
saints.

<sup>1</sup> The Angels.

<sup>2</sup> The Archangel Gabriel, who descended during the Triumph of Christ; Par. xxiii. 94.

bore the palm-branch down to Mary, when the Son of God willed to take upon Him our burden. But follow now with thine eyes the course of my speech, and note the great patricians of this most just and pious empire. The two who are seated there above in highest bliss from being nearest to the Empress, are the two roots, as it were, of this rose <sup>1</sup>. He that is next to her on the left hand is the father, through whose unbridled craving mankind taste so great bitterness. On the right thou beholdest that ancient father of Holy Church, to whom Christ entrusted the keys of this beauteous flower. And he <sup>2</sup> who ere his death saw all the times of affliction of the fair spouse who was won by the lance and the nails, doth sit beside him; and beside the other rests that leader <sup>3</sup>, under whom the thankless, inconstant, disobedient folk were fed with manna. Opposite to Peter thou seest Anna seated, who is so happy in contemplating her daughter, that even while singing Hosannah she withdraws not her eyes from her; and opposite the first father of our race sits Lucy, she who dispatched thy Lady, what time with drooping eyes thou wast hurrying downward <sup>4</sup>. But seeing that the time allotted to thy Vision is passing swiftly, here we will stop, like the careful sempster who cuts his coat according to his cloth; and we will direct our eyes toward the primal Love, so that by gazing thereat thou mayst as far as possible penetrate its lustre. Notwithstanding—lest haply by moving thy wings <sup>5</sup> thou shouldst go backward while

<sup>1</sup> The heads of the two families of those, who believed in Christ before and after His coming respectively—Adam and St. Peter.

<sup>2</sup> St. John the Evangelist, who had the vision of the Apocalypse.

<sup>3</sup> Moses.

<sup>4</sup> When Dante was in the wood of error; *Inf.* i. 61; *ii.* 100.

<sup>5</sup> i. e. by trusting thy own powers.

thinking to go forward—it behoves us to obtain grace by prayer—grace from her who hath power to aid thee; and do thou follow me in feeling, so that thy heart may not fail to accompany my words': anon he began the following saintly prayer.

## CANTO XXXIII. THE EMPYREAN HEAVEN

'Virgin Mother, daughter of thy Son, humble and exalted beyond all created beings, predestined object of the eternal counsel, 'tis thou who didst ennoble human nature so, that its Creator disdained not to become its creature. In thy womb was rekindled the love, through the warmth whereof this flower hath thus expanded in the eternal peace. Here thou art to us a noonday beam of love, and among mortals below thou art a quickening fount of hope. Lady, thou art so noble and so powerful, that whoso longs for grace and betakes him not to thee, would fain without wings speed the flight of his desires. Thy kindliness doth not alone aid the suppliant, but oftentimes spontaneously anticipates the asking. In thee is compassion, in thee is pity, in thee is magnificence, in thee all the virtues of created beings are combined. Now this one, who from the lowest abyss of the universe even unto this height hath viewed, one after another, the spiritual realms, doth pray thee of thy grace to endow him with so great power, that his eyes may soar still higher toward the source of blessedness. And I, who never more eagerly desired the sight of God for myself than now I do for him, beseech thee instantly, and pray that my petitions may not fail, that thou by thy prayers shouldst dissipate every cloud of his mortality,

St. Bernard  
intercedes  
with the  
Virgin for  
Dante.

so that He who is the fullness of joy may be manifested to him. Furthermore I beseech thee, O Queen, thou who canst accomplish what thou wilt, after that glorious sight to preserve untainted his desires. His human impulses let thy watchful care restrain: see how with Beatrice a multitude of saints in advocacy of my supplication clasp their hands.'

Dante's  
power of  
sight is  
sublimated.

The eyes which God both loves and reveres<sup>1</sup>, intently fixed on the speaker, revealed to us how grateful to her are devout prayers. Anon they turned them toward the eternal Light, into the essence of which, we must believe, no eye of created being can penetrate with equal clearness. And I, who was drawing nigh to the goal of all desires, felt, as was meet, that the ardour of longing ceased within me<sup>2</sup>. With smiling countenance Bernard signed to me to look upward; but already of myself I was fulfilling his wish, for my sight, becoming perfectly clear, passed inward more and more through the beam of the sublime Light, which in itself is true. From this point onward that which I beheld transcends our powers of speech, which fail to describe such a sight, and our memory fails to recall such immensity. As when a man sees objects in a dream, and thereafter the feeling it produced remains, but the rest recurs not to his mind, such is my case, for my vision is all but obliterated, yet the sweetness which proceeded therefrom even now distils within my heart. Thus before the sun doth snow dissolve; thus before the wind the Sibyl's oracles, inscribed on the flitting leaves, were lost. O Light supreme, who dost rise so far above mortal thought, grant to my mind once more a faint image of the semblance thou didst wear, and so empower my tongue,

<sup>1</sup> The Virgin is loved by Christ as God, and revered by Him as Man.

<sup>2</sup> Desire was being replaced by fruition and tranquillity.



that it may leave to future ages but a spark of thy glory ; for, should it return in a measure to my memory, and be proclaimed, though faintly, in these verses, a higher conception will be formed of thy surpassing might.

So great was the keenness of the living ray which I endured, He sees the face of God. that, had I withdrawn mine eyes from it, methinks I should have been dazed ; and for this cause, I remember, I was the more emboldened to endure, so that I fixed mine eyes on the infinite Majesty. O bounteous gift of grace, in the strength of which I dared to gaze so steadfastly within the eternal Light, that I beheld to the full all that was visible there ! I saw how within its depths is stored, bound together in one volume by the force of love, all that throughout the universe forms separate leaves—substance and accidents and their mode of operation, combined together, as it seemed, in such wise, that what I speak of is one simple light. The Essence which pervades this combination I believe myself to have seen, because while I say this I am conscious of an access of joy. A single moment hath effaced this sight from my mind more completely, than five-and-twenty centuries have effaced the enterprise, which caused Neptune to wonder at the shadow of the Argo<sup>1</sup>. Thus did my mind, all absorbed, gaze steadfastly in rapt attention, and as it gazed it was more and more enkindled. In the presence of that Light the spirit is so entranced, that it never can consent to turn from it to regard aught else ; for all the good at which our wishes aim is comprehended therein, and apart from it that is defective which within it is perfect. Henceforward my speech will be more

<sup>1</sup> In other words :—‘ I forgot in a single moment more of what I saw in the face of God, than men have forgotten in twenty-five centuries of the Argonautic expedition,’ the earliest important event recorded in history. Neptune wondered at the Argo, because it was the first vessel which crossed the sea.

inadequate to express even what I remember, than that of a child which still sucks its mother's breast.

The  
mystery of  
the Trinity,  
and that of  
the two  
Natures in  
Christ.

Not because there was more than a single aspect in the living Light which I was regarding—for that is ever what it was before—but because my sight gained strength as I gazed, that which had but one appearance presented itself differently to me as I myself changed. In the deep clear substance of the sublime Light I beheld three circles of three colours and of one dimension; and the second appeared to be reflected from the first, as rainbow is from rainbow, and the third resembled fire proceeding equally from both. O how defective is language, how feeble to represent my conceit; and this, compared with what I saw, is so slight, that 'little' is too weak a word. O Light eternal, who alone abidest in Thyself, alone understandest Thyself, and being understood of Thyself and understanding Thyself dost love and smile<sup>1</sup>! That circle which seemed to be begotten in Thee like reflected light, after I had contemplated it with mine eyes awhile, appeared to me to be painted within of its very own colour with our likeness<sup>2</sup>, for the sight of which my looks were fastened upon it. As is the geometrician, who is all intent on measuring the circle<sup>3</sup>, yet for all his thinking fails to discover the principle which he needs; such was I in the presence of that unwonted sight: I desired to see how the image conformed itself to the circle, and how it finds its place therein<sup>4</sup>; but for so high a flight mine own unaided wings

<sup>1</sup> The expressions used in this sentence represent the Divine Unity, and the relations of the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity to one another.

<sup>2</sup> This describes the mystery of the Incarnation.

<sup>3</sup> i. e. attempting to square the circle, which is considered to be impossible.

<sup>4</sup> How Christ's Humanity can be united with His Divinity.

availed not, had it not been that my mind was smitten by  
a bright beam, which contained the object of its desire. Here  
failed the power of my lofty fantasy ; but still my desires and  
my will were guided, like a wheel revolving uniformly, by the  
Love which moves the sun and the other stars.

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